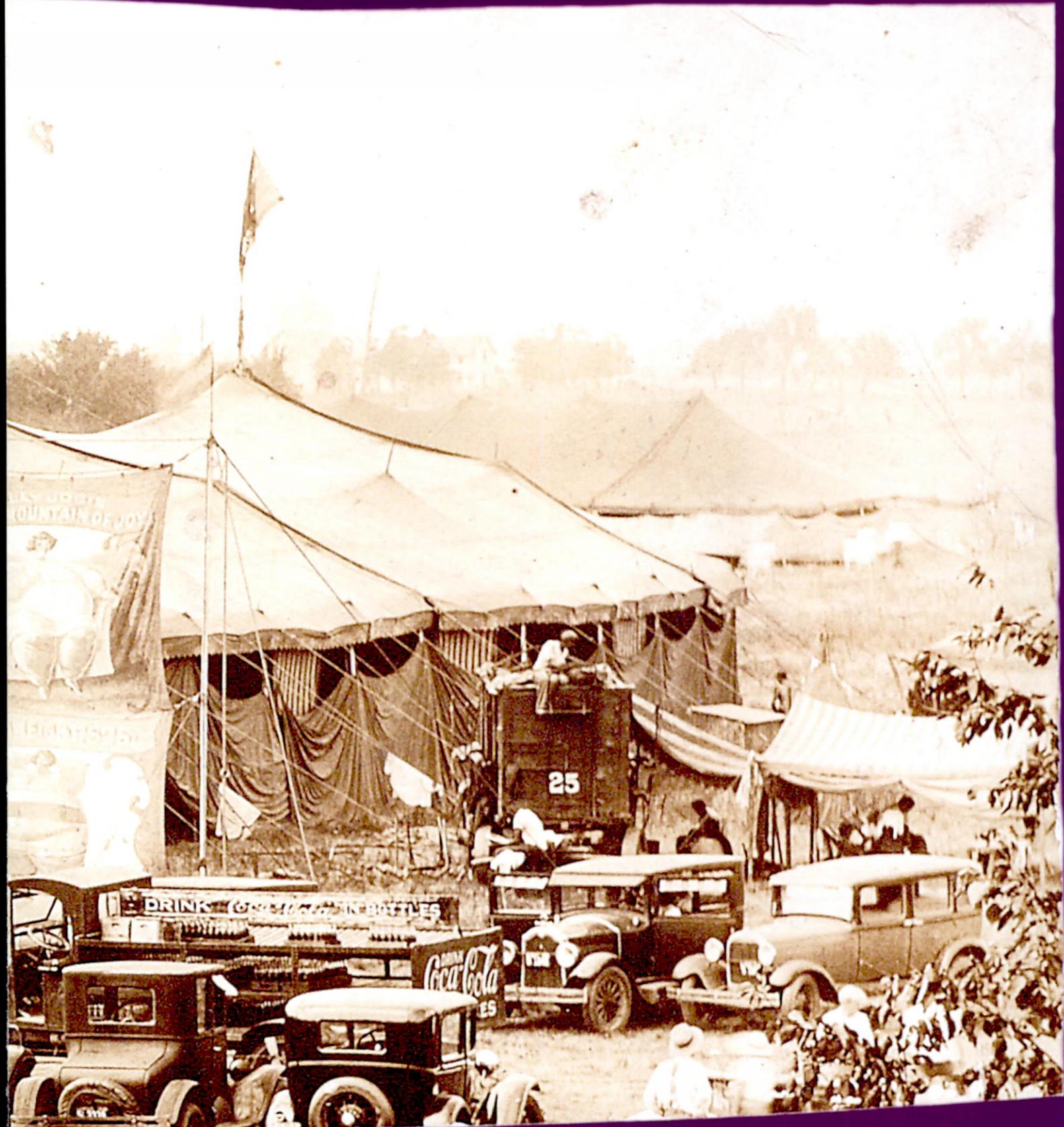


Bandwagon

Vol. 58 No. 2 2014



The Journal of the Circus Historical Society



Circus Historical Society

circushistory.org

Mission Statement

To preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present.

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Note from the Editor

On September 10, 1929, *The New York Times* announced "Ringling Buys Out Five Circus Rivals." The subtitle, referring to John Ringling, read: "Man Who Started as a Clown Now Owns the Entire Big Top Industry." This moment marked a major turning point in American circus history as the largest railroad circuses all came under a single management. By 1933 only three would still exist: Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and Al. G. Barnes.

The articles in this issue weave a loose thread through this fascinating period in circus history. CHS Board member John Polacek offers a fascinating study of the men who managed the Ringling-owned shows of the 1930 season. By compiling, transcribing, and interpreting correspondence between Director of Personnel, Pat Valdo and the managers of the former corporation shows, John's article gives insight into the process of staging the large railroad shows and into the personalities who excelled at that task. Bob Cline, CHS Treasurer, has shared the history of Lentz Bros. Studios, a business which can be credited with some of the most stellar images of the Peru Winter Quarters taken in the 1930 era. And Marcy Murray, a Professor of English Literature as well as a former staff member of the Ringling Circus Museum, explores the use of race in the promotion of performers and attractions from 1860-1930, ending her discussion with the Ubangis who began touring with the Ringling show in the 1930 season. *Bandwagon's* Associate Editor, Fred Dahlinger, catapults us into the 21st century with a recap of the informative and enjoyable 2014 CHS convention in Montreal.

Thanks are due to the authors in this issue who have committed a great deal of time and energy to capturing in the written word such informative stories of the historic circus. John Polasek's article was made possible through access to historic documents in the collections of Fred Pfening III and John Zweifel while Malcolm McCarter was of great assistance to Bob Cline in crafting the article about the Lentz Bros. Studios. Additional acknowledgement must go to John and Mardi Wells for the magic they do to put all of our words onto the page. A special last minute thanks to Ray Gronso for supplying some wonderful images of the CHS convention in Montreal.

JLP

A Lentz Bros. photo of the Peru winter quarters.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

About the Cover

On August 20, 1930 in Independence, Kansas, Leo Mallonee photographed the front lot of the John Robinson Circus. His photograph graces the cover of the issue, bringing to life one of the final days of this long running circus. Two weeks later, the *Decatur Daily Review* in Illinois ran a small article saying that "hard times" explained why this circus was ending its season a month and a half earlier than usual. The show returned to Peru winter quarters and would never go out again under the single John Robinson title. The 1930s were a hard period for American entertainment as the country sank deeply into the Depression, and the John Robinson show was among the casualties.

Two days before Mallonee took this photograph, a reporter from the *Iola Register* exuberantly reviewed the afternoon performance:

The circus this afternoon started off with a mighty pageant "Cleopatra" Queen of Egypt a beautiful offering with songs and dances set with electric effects that makes this feature an outstanding presentation that is worth the price of admission alone. Act after act and feature after feature went in rapid succession and it would be hard to tell which one was the real star. John

Robinson is a first class circus and has many new and different sensations that will please everyone—those that were at the circus this afternoon were mighty well pleased and those who miss the circus will miss a wonderful evening's entertainment.

In the image, the lot is coming to life, from the girls walking past the ticket box wagon and the man standing in the sideshow ticket bow to the men resting under the small tent, two tents from the left of the ticket wagon. Behind the banner line advertising such curiosities as "Jolly Josie" the "Human Mountain of Joy" and "Prof. Brown's Plantation Minstrels," the three main tents rise; the sideshow at the front right, the menagerie to the left, and peeking over the top, the flags of the big top.

As a document of the last days of a circus that was originally founded in 1856, this photograph is a window on the important history that played out as John Ringling assumed the mantle of "Circus King" and altered the landscape of traveling entertainments with the 1930 season of the six shows under his ownership. The photograph, part of the Tibbals Collection at the Ringling Museum, also embodies the words of the reporter from Iola, Kansas who wrote that "there is something about a circus that lingers with us forever."



Bandwagon

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Website and Back Issues

An index of *Bandwagon* articles from earlier issues is available online at www.circushistory.org. Back issues are available from the Office of Publication.

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Hippo cart in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1930.

The Ringling, MacDougall Collection



LENTZ BROS. STUDIOS

Peru, Indiana

by Bob Cline



Ringling Museum, Tibbats Collection



Author's collection

The Lentz Bros. Studios captured a number of memorable images of a young Clyde Beatty in the early 1930s. Often, Lentz Studios images were reproduced in couriers and programs for the American Circus Corporation shows. The image above was printed in a 1930 Hagenbeck-Wallace courier.

Among the most dramatic photographs of circus stars of the 20th century is that of a young Clyde Beatty and a lion in a cage at the Peru, Indiana Winter Quarters of Hagenbeck-Wallace in the 1930s. This image, seen on the right above, used for decades by circuses including Cole Bros., and by Beatty himself, was taken by Lentz Bros. Studios, a photographic business whose history parallels the development of its home town, Peru, Indiana as the "Circus Capital of the World."

Peru, Indiana, was a quiet little town located in Peru Township, a part of Miami County. Lying just a little over 60 miles straight north of Indianapolis, Indiana, on US 31, the area belonged to the Miami tribe of Native Americans until 1826 when a treaty was established giving up some of the land to the settlers. In 1829, William Hood acquired 210 acres that he called Peru. Five years later the Indiana Legislature approved the incorporation of the City of Peru.

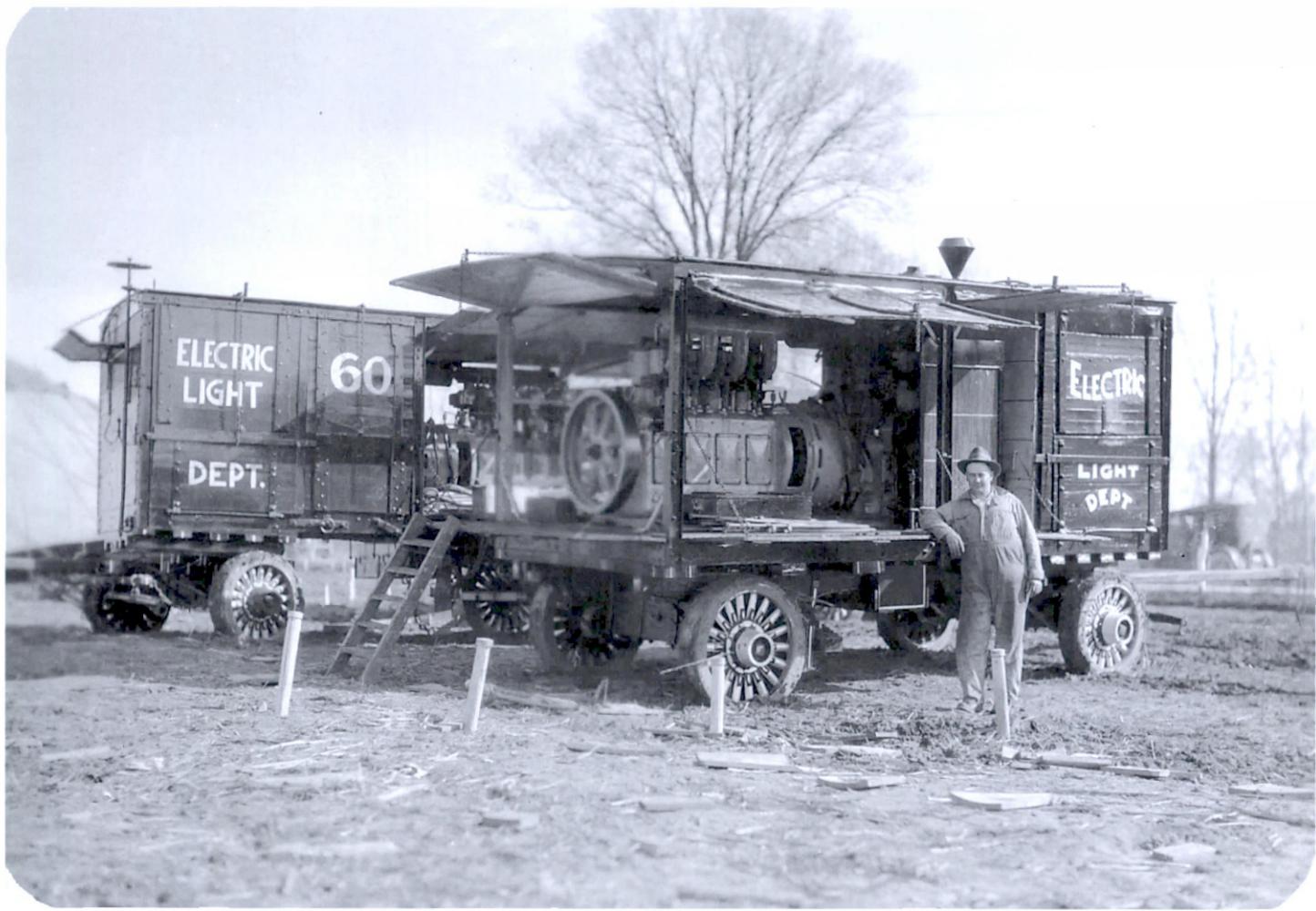
Peru was serviced originally by the Lake Erie and Western Railroad which was completed for operations in 1854. Peru became a railroad mecca with a roundhouse and yards established. Over the years, the railroads would continue to expand in other directions, with lines connecting Peru

to larger cities both east and west. The Wabash Railroad became the central figure in the town's history. Waterways were also a major part of Peru's early development, with the Wabash and Erie Canals being used to transport families, equipment, necessities, and even forms of entertainment to town.

Early settlers came from all parts of the world, most with strong European backgrounds. Such was the case with Louis Lentz (1832 –January 25, 1918), born in Ohio to immigrants from Wurtemburg (later part of Germany). Louis, his wife Mary (ca. 1836 –1866) and their children came to settle in Peru where he brought his tinner or tinsmith trade to town. He worked at the Palmer and Deniston hardware store located on South Broadway.¹

Having already had two sons, Winfield (b. 1855) and Daniel (b. 1857) who were born in Ohio, the family settled into their home at 16 West Second Street in Peru. It would be here that the rest of the family was born. This included Anson (b. 1861-1954) and Charles (b. 1866-1951). Sadly, Mary, their mother, passed away in 1866 in Peru.

Louis re-married a lady he met in Peru named Louisa Deniston (1842 – March 24, 1916). Their union also



Hagenbeck-Wallace generator wagons photographed by Lentz Studios.

Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

brought two more children into the family. Louis (b. 1869) was joined by the only sister of the family, Laura (b. 1871).² At some point in time, the family moved just a house or two away as the 1887 census in town would list the family address as 20 West Second Street. Tinsmiths served apprenticeships for four to six years. Learning the family business kept many a family together, and this was no exception as Winfield started following his father's footsteps.

The opportunity to get a high school education prevailed for most of the children. Anson graduated from Peru High School. After completing high school, Anson studied the fine art of photography, a choice which led the way to his life-long career in the business.³ Charles, being five years younger, also followed in the study of photography, and they opened a storefront business in Peru in 1882.⁴ The studio was opened on the second floor of what was called the Zern's Block. This was No. 2 and No. 4 South Broadway.⁵

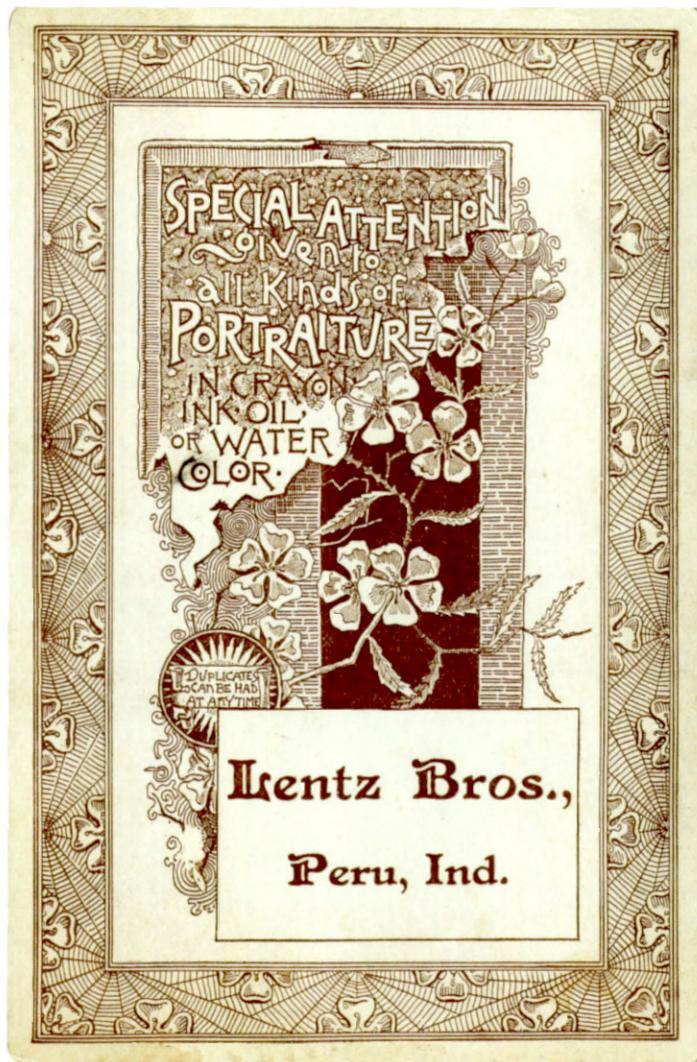
A quick understanding of life in Peru in 1882 is offered in the Indiana State Gazetteer Business Directory of 1882-1883. It describes Peru as an industrious town full of hard-working individuals numbering nearly 7,000. Having been established 50 years earlier, the town had a full fire depart-

ment, good water works, a telephone exchange, and a handsome new opera house. Significant industries included two sawmills, two foundries, a sewing cabinet factory, a flax bagging factory, three flour mills, a brickyard, two breweries, six hotels, two national banks, and two weekly newspapers.

The year 1882 was also an important one in circus history. That year, Ben Wallace, who had operated a livery stable in Peru for 18 years, attended a bankruptcy sale of the W. C. Coup Circus that was stranded near the town. Wallace became the proud owner of six or seven railcars full of tents, poles, costumes, and equipment plus a few animals.⁶ While a fire on January 25, 1884 ravaged these early efforts before he even got started, Wallace was not discouraged. He contracted with a local wagon builder named Sullivan and Eagle to construct several highly ornate circus wagons. Wallace finally debuted his circus in Peru, Indiana, on April 26, 1884. The circus world would never be the same.

An 1883 ad for the Lentz Brothers Photograph Gallery proclaimed "Lentz Bros. for fine card photographs, cabinets, panels, best Bentons in the City." They were located over the Citizens National Bank.⁷

Peru was growing. Business was good as more people



Left, the back of a card photo produced by the studio.

Author's collection

came to town to settle and children grew up. As the local economy grew from year to year, the Lentz Bros. Studios had grown, too. Now moved up to the third floor of the Zern Block, they decided to expand their operation into Rochester, Indiana, in 1892. The new studio was a ground-floor business opposite the Arlington Hotel. Life was good for Anson in 1892 as well. He met and married his wife, the former Nellie Harmon, in 1892 in Liberty, Indiana. They took up residence in the Noftsger block in Rochester.⁸

With a complete studio operation, the customer base for the Lentz Bros. Studios was family and church pictures as well as portraits. Some of the preserved photos found in collections today range from baby pictures to youth, young adult, and couples as well as the local Miami tribesmen. The cameras used the glass plate negatives at the time. The Lentz Bros. were a full-service operation that handled all of their own darkroom needs.

Charles was also an artist. The Lentz Bros. expanded their photography business by changing their advertising to announce the "Lentz Bros. Photographic Art Studio." One ad said, "Special Attention given to Portraiture in crayon, ink oils or water color." Another ad stated "Duplicates or enlargements can be furnished from this negative. Fine crayons a specialty."

By 1900, the Lentz Bros. had re-located to a ground

Crowds watch an act rehearse at the Peru Winter Quarters, circa 1920.

Author's collection





Hay stacked at the Winter Quarters, circa 1920.

Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

floor storefront at 13 West Main Street in Peru.⁹ Their operation in Rochester still was active in 1900 as evidenced by the city business directories. The town continued to grow in size, among the influx were show folks taking up residence in Peru. While Anson took almost all of the pictures outside of the studio, Charles remained inside the studio to keep things going. It became necessary for the Lentz Bros. to employ some help.

Frank Krieg was a young man still in high school when he went to work for the Lentz Bros. He was learning the photographic trade. His duties were to help develop and print photos in the darkroom, sweep, clean up, and assist as needed. Ulysses Leffel was a family man from Peru. In his employment with the Lentz Bros. he, too, learned the photographic trade, but staying with the Lentz Bros. for so many years, he also became the right-hand man to Anson as he drove the car to their site work, handled all the equipment, and watched as Anson would photograph the subject. Both Krieg and Leffel had the opportunity to take photographs for the Lentz Bros. during their years with the firm.

As the circus became a bigger part of life in Peru, photography of the circus also became a bigger requirement for new programs and advertising needs. Many of the performers had their promotional photos taken by the Lentz Bros. with some coming to the studio and others at the winter quarters. The performers were also very wise about their promotional photos. Rather than have the Lentz Bros. make them 100 or 200 copies, most would be sent off to a photo mill in Chicago where they could get 200 photos for \$3.00 or \$4.00.

Interestingly, by the early 1900s, the Lentz Bros. business was good enough that they did not take photographs just for the sake of taking a picture that might eventually sell one day. Rather, every photo they took was ordered ahead of time with the exception of the great flood of 1913. When it came to the circus photos, in particular, none of these were ever offered to the public for sale. The taking of the circus photos was simply a business deal and bore no interest to Anson or Charles. It is only that these negatives still survive that we have any knowledge of their being taken at all.¹⁰

The one thing that the Lentz Bros. did enjoy was reading the *Chicago Tribune* and talking politics. Their usual daily routine started in the darkroom every morning in the cooler hours of the day. Once the daily darkroom work was over and cleaned up, the discussions be-

gan. Charles never married but he, Anson, and Anson's wife Nellie, were the best of friends. Their only real relaxation was at a cottage on the lake that they would visit every so often while entrusting the business to their employees.¹¹

A 1907 ad for the Lentz Studios gave a little idea of how large they had grown. They were known for the highest level of quality in their work. They were the studio that did the correct thing for their customers every time. They were the studio that had over 25,000 cards to choose from. Their April sale offered their normal \$4.00 photos for \$2.57. Their \$3.50 pictures were marked down to \$2.33, \$3.00 pictures were offered for \$2.00, and dozens of smaller sizes were reduced as well.¹²

Anson was the business man of the two. Many times Charles would be asked about this or that, and the answer would always be "ask Anson." Charles never drove a car. While doing site work, Ulysses Leffel would drive and Anson went with him. Since it was Charles that remained in the Studio, it was Charles who taught the ways of the darkroom to the new employees.¹³

By 1910, the Lentz Bros. Studio had moved to 15 West Main Street, one building over from their former location. Anson and his wife Nellie lived just down the street at 26 West Main Street. Charles lived at home with his parents and his younger brother, Louis until 1918, when he moved in with Anson and Nellie.

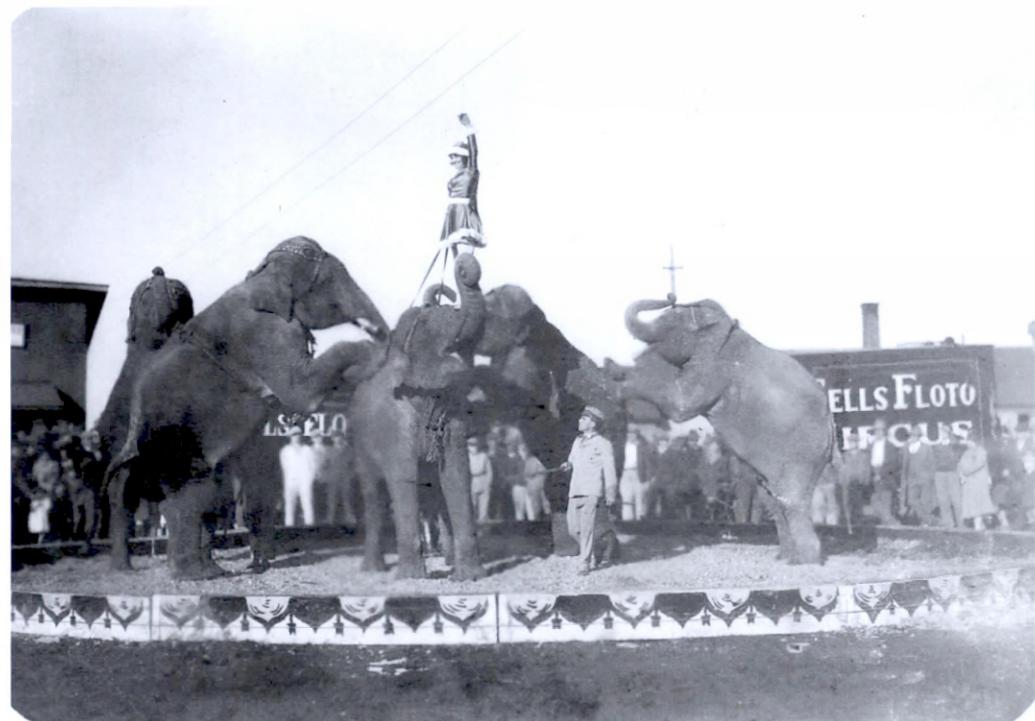
The ability to do fine art work ran in the Lentz Family. Not only was Charles a master with photo oil colors, but one of his brothers worked for the Pullman Company where he gold-leaved the titles and designs on the coaches at

the Michigan City and Chicago shops. Another brother, Daniel, had moved to Guthrie, Oklahoma, where he, too, operated a photo studio.¹⁴

The principal photographic medium of the early twentieth century, the glass-plate negative, was slowly being converted to a film format. World War I largely saw the end of the glass-plate negatives in the industry. Like their contemporaries, the Lentz Studio would have begun the transition to the new film format.

Family and individual portrait photographs were the biggest part of the Lentzs' business. The circus was actually an unprofitable venture in the long run as there were no other sales past the first photo taken for performers or the circus owners. Graduations, Christmas greetings, births, and weddings were all big-business ventures. Sometimes they also were hired to document changes to infrastructure in their region.

Around 1930, the highway department had straightened some curves in the road on US 31 north of Peru. The Lentz Bros. were contracted to photograph the finished work.



Sells Foto elephants practice, circa 1930.

Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Ulysses Leffel drove the big heavy car to the site. Both he and Anson got out of the car to begin setting up the equipment. While they worked on preparations, the car started to roll. Anson figured he would just get in front of the car and stop it himself. The car didn't stop, however. Anson suffered a broken pelvis and spent many months in the hospital. Continually in pain after that, he always used a cane the



The Lentz Bros. building, circa 1954, owned by Mac McCarter.

Courtesy of M. D. McCarter

rest of his life.⁵

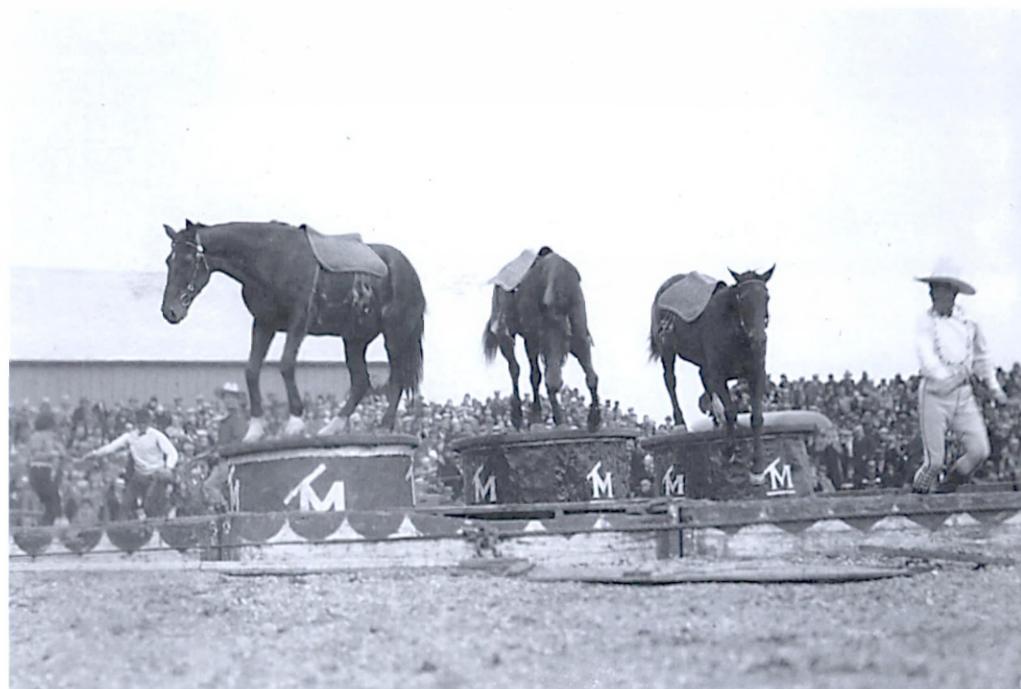
The wagons and buildings included in surviving glass plate negatives indicate that the Lentz Bros. took some photographs at the winter quarters in the 1920s. Since they were contracted by the circus to photograph the quarters, it seems likely that the circus management needed photographs in the newer style of advertising that was moving away from the fine art of the lithographers and into photographic reproductions.

The Lentz Bros.' circus photos were used in various forms of the show's publicity over the years with several photos being found in the couriers that helped advertise the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Surprisingly, with the Sell-Floto and John Robinson Shows under the American Circus Corporation banner, no Lentz Bros. photos have been identified in advertising for those shows. This may be because most of the Lentz Bros. photos used appear after those shows were pulled off the road.

Lentz Bros. Studios was single-floor business sandwiched between two-story buildings. The building on the left of the Lentz Bros. Studio was the original interurban station. The upstairs rooms were rented out with Doctor Carlson, the eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist, having it most of the time. The building to the right was a hotel on the upper level and the newsstand and restaurant on the bottom or ground floor.

The door to Lentz Bros. Studios was located to the left side of the building with a large window in the display room and three smaller windows to the right; the building was 39 feet wide. The roof was flat with a sloping toward the back of the building which was 40 or 45 feet deep. Out behind the building was a corrugated metal addition which housed a toilet and a coal storage area.

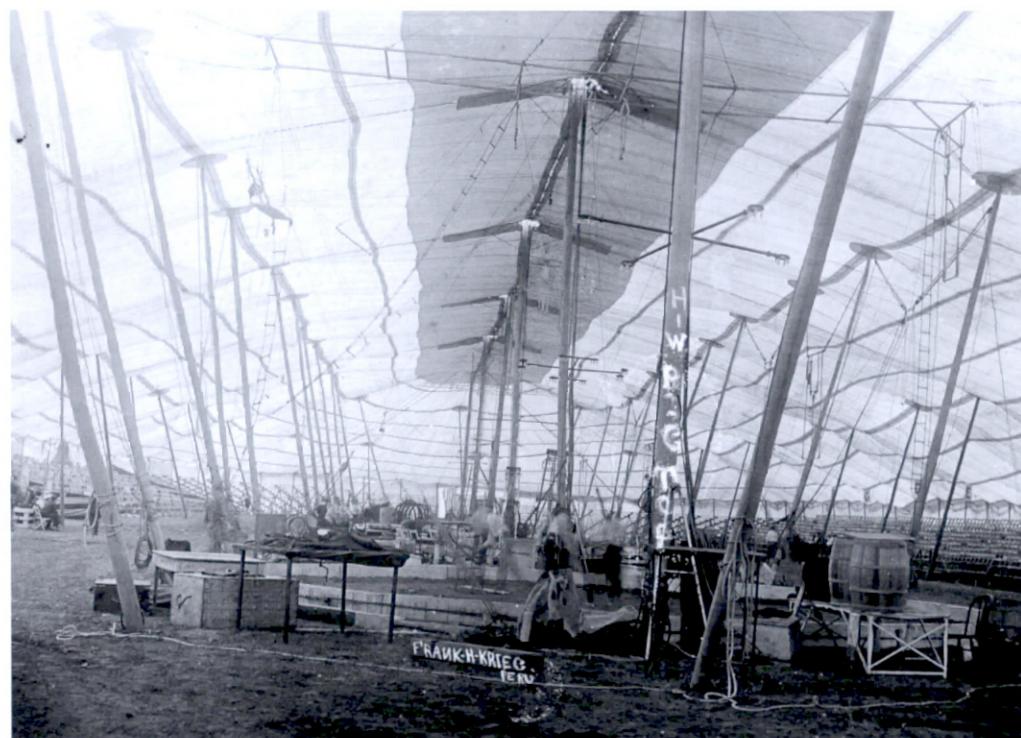
Once customers entered



Tom Mix practicing one of his displays, circa 1930. Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

the Studios, they found the sales room filled with chairs and photo displays. Toward the back of the sales room, there was a large glass showcase and the old brass cash register. This sales room took up the area inside the front door and large window and went about halfway back in the building.

This photo shows the three small windows were where the actual studio existed. There was a skylight slanting from



A view inside the Hagenbeck-Wallace big top taken by Frank Krieg in 1913.

Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Inside a dining tent.

Author's collection

the sidewalk to the top of the building, but it was broken out by the fire department during the 1935 fire, and the three small windows were then put in for light to enter the building.

The studio held a double carbon arc light and a large Cooper-Hewitt light which was hung with four incandescent reflectors with a large light bulb inside each one. While the studio was of considerable size, the darkroom was at the back end of it. The darkroom was also divided into a smaller room where the enlarging was done by Charles on a 5 x 7 Elwood enlarger. The entire building was heated with two coal-burning units. A Royal Oak Coal stove kept the darkroom area heated while a base burner coal stove heated the rest of the building.

Malcolm McCarter related a wonderful story of how the town was slowly built where wilderness once stood. One day after he had bought the business in 1947, his father was helping him replace some pretty rough flooring. There wasn't anything under the flooring except some stumps from the trees that were cut down years ago to build the structure. All of the walls were plastered with plain wallpaper on them.

On Tuesday, December 10, 1935, at approximately 11 o'clock in the morning, the Lentz Bros. suffered a terrible disaster when a fire broke out in the darkroom. Ulysses Lefel, working in the darkroom, had struck a match to give him just enough light to find what he was looking for. Unfortunately, the flame touched a film overheard and ignited

instantly. This began a roaring fire in the darkroom.⁶ The darkroom was at the very back of the building, so the fire climbed upward and followed the roof line. With the ceiling joists going from front to back in the building, the fire quickly rushed forward rather than to the side where it met a closed door going to the enlarging room.

Because the fire had not spread too quickly, Anson, Charles, and Ulysses were able to grab cameras, lenses, and other valuables as they rushed out the building. With the response of the fire department and about an hour's worth of hard work, the fire was controlled, but the studio lighting and a lifetime of photographic files and negatives had been destroyed. The damages totaled over \$14,000.00. Miraculously, the one file with about 400 circus negatives was about the only thing that was salvaged. Most of these were glass-plate negatives and a few films, and were stored in the enlarging room, which escaped fire and water damage. We, as historians and circus fans, are forever thankful for such an ironic twist to such a terrible event.

Some of these surviving circus photos (printed later by Malcolm McCarter) were taken by Frank Krieg in his spare time. They are printed from glass plate negatives the size of a postcard and while the Lentz Studio probably assisted in the development and distribution of these photos, they were specifically created to be sold at the West and Stevens Stationery Store. Years later, after the 1937 fire, McCarter was there when Frank Krieg came by the Studio. Malcolm

told him he had found a few of his glass-plate negatives that had survived the fire. Frank no longer had an interest in photography and told Malcolm to keep them.

While a lifetime of film, negatives, and records were lost in just a few painful minutes, the Lentz Bros. were not down and out. After all, this was the peak of their Christmas season. With plenty of workingmen to help clean out the mess and remodel as quickly as possible, the Lentz Bros. Studios went back to taking Christmas pictures on Saturday, December 14th.¹⁷

One afternoon in 1939, a young kid delivering his newspapers on his bicycle was asked by one of his customers, Nellie Lentz, if he would like to work at the Lentz Studios. Eager with excitement, he went racing to his father's place of employment to ask permission. Once his father agreed, the young lad took the job that would set him on a path to a lifetime in photography. This young man was named Malcolm "Mac" McCarter. The year 1939 was also the first time Malcolm ever took a photograph himself when he shot a Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive in Logansport. This was the beginning of the Lentz Bros. railroad collection. After working for the Lentz Bros. a couple years, Malcolm went off to the Navy during World War II where he worked as a photographer.⁸

When he returned to the Lentz Bros. Studios after the war, he was offered the chance of a lifetime – the opportunity to own the Lentz Bros. Studios. Anson and Charles had been pioneer businessmen in the Peru area for almost 64 years. Purchasing the business as of January 1, 1947, Malcolm owned the circus negatives that survived the 1935 fire as well as all the photographs taken after that time. He kept the Lentz Bros. Studios open in Peru until 1957 when his wife's medical problems inspired a move to Arizona.

Mac still sells the circus photos that were never available to the public before 1947. Many still have the Lentz Bros. Studios stamp on the back.

Nellie Lentz passed away in 1944. Charles Lincoln Lentz, a member of the Peru lodge of the Knights of Pythias, who had been ill for over a year, died on Monday August 27, 1951. He was 87 years old. Anson lived a couple more years in a nursing facility. He died Friday Sept. 24, 1954. He was 94 years old. They are all buried beside each other in Mt. Hope cemetery in Peru. **BW**



Malcolm "Mac" McCarter in a photo taken by his daughter.

Courtesy of Susan McCarter Chester

This article could not have been made possible without the generously shared memories of Malcolm McCarter, a CHS member (#439) since 1949. He has provided details and an insight into this fascinating business that no newspaper coverage would have ever offered. I also thank Mac for the generous use of many of the photographs in this article.

Endnotes

1. Peru City Directory, 1860.
2. 1880 Census, accessed on Ancestry.com
3. *Rochester Sentinel*, September 20, 1895.
4. *Peru Republican*, unknown date, 1947
5. Peru Business Database (Enyert)
6. International Circus Hall of Fame website
7. Miami County Museum Collection, Peru, Indiana
8. *Rochester Sentinel*, September 20, 1895.
9. Peru Business Database (Enyert)
10. Author's conversation with Malcolm McCarter
11. *Ibid.*
12. Miami County Museum Collection, Peru, Indiana
13. Author's conversation with Malcolm McCarter
14. *ibid*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Peru Tribune*, December 10, 1935.
17. *Peru Tribune*, December 13, 1935.
18. Author's conversation with Malcolm McCarter

2014 CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION



The Cirque du Soleil tent set up at the Old Harbor.

photo by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

by Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

The 2014 annual convention of the Circus Historical Society provided engaging portions of education, fellowship and entertainment, served up on a platter of classical circus expertise mixing with contemporary circus existence, all on Canadian turf. Staged in Montreal, Quebec, the July 10-12 date was chosen to take advantage of the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival. The city is serious about circus. Convention chair Al Stencell (left), a veteran member of the Canadian show fraternity, excelled in assembling a superb program that provided an extraordinary breadth of diversity.



photo by Deborah Walk

The first day was devoted to presentations, six papers, two films, and a two-person discourse. Stencell opened the day with a rare color film of Wallace Bros. Shows, the famed Canadian railroad carnival. Giovanni Iuliani knowingly opened the door to a long suppressed topic, the typhoid epidemic on the 1934 RB&BB Combine, with Geordie Willis informing the group about the presence of Slaymaker & Nichols at the time of the Charlottetown Convention for Canadian federation. Richard Risley was covered by 2013

Stuart Thayer Prize winner Frederik Schodt and Richard Flint introduced a rarely seen film covering the extraordinary pre-circus career of Irvin Feld. Dr. Louis LeRoux gave an overview of Quebec circus history and Kate Browne revealed a hitherto unknown 1871 diary that shed light on the Barnum show and women associated with it. The session closed with Harry Kuntz's summary of all early Montreal entertainments and Germain Borque discussing contemporary show music with Al Stencell.

In the evening the group took a bus ride to Montreal's Old Port harbor area for dinner and to enjoy Cirque du Soleil's newest show, Kurios, before it struck the tent and moved on.

The entire second day was spent in what I termed "acrobatic valley," a reclaimed city land fill (proudly stated to be the 4th largest on earth). Set in the Saint Michel district, the property borders the land fill which the city began the process of reclaiming in 1995. In support of the project, Guy Laliberte chose the location for the new headquarters of Cirque du Soleil, which opened its doors in 1997. With the opening of the National Circus School in 2003 and of TOHU in 2004, the area developed its layered identity as an ecologically minded community center offering programs and resources to encourage green living (methane gas collection for heating and 45,000 honey bees), to support the social well-being of the neighborhood (offering employment and communal spaces), and, of course, to serve as a hub for the



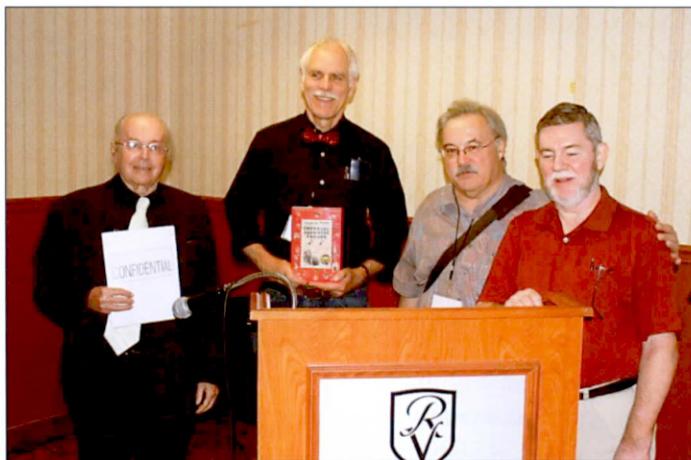
Cirque du Soleil headquarters.

photo by Ray Gronso

circus arts. The convention attendees split into two groups which alternated through the tours at TUHO and Cirque de Soleil facilities. One group toured the immense and expansive Soleil headquarters, observing artists in rehearsal, wardrobe departments in production, and Cirque's refined process for documenting the appearance and measurements of their performers through 3-D scanning. Soleil's headquarters is a rambling home to 2,000 employees, which produce new shows (now two per year, less than the six previously) as well as supporting all of the shows currently in operation world-wide.

The other group visited the TOHU facility, receiving an introduction to the history of the property, a behind the scenes tour of the theater, and an opportunity to stroll through a public exhibition of a portion of the Pascal Jacobs circus collection of circus materials including posters, prints, and other decorative art objects.

The name TOHU came from the French "tohu bohu," which roughly translates to topsy-turvy. The physical plan of TOHU replicates a classical circus structure, like Cirque d'Hiver, including the 13-meter central ring area, but outfitted with every technological marvel known to veterans.



Speakers Giovanni Iuliani, Frederik Schodt, Al Stencell, and Richard Flint.
photo by Fred Dahlinger



One of the groups learning about the history of TOHU.
photo by Ray Gronso

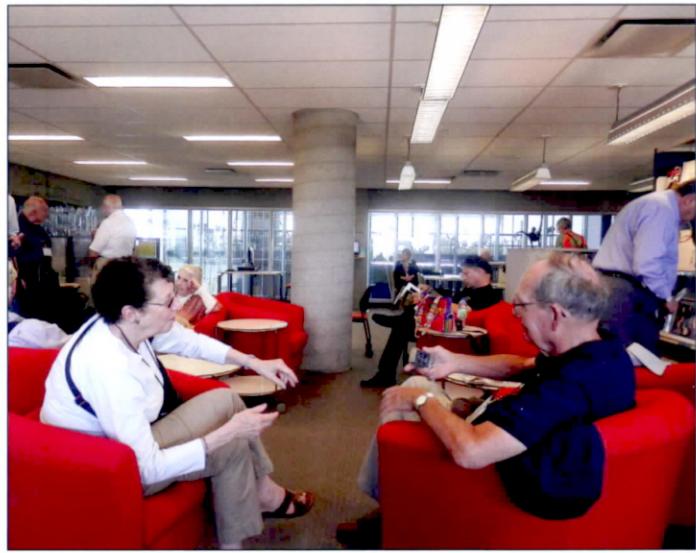


Panel discussion with Circus Now. Left to right are Jeff Jenkins, Andreane Leclerc, Jan Rok Achard, Patrick LeRoux, Brian Liddicoat, Al Stencell, and Duncan Wall.

photo by Ray Gronso

Those features included an elaborate roof structure for suspending apparatus in the air, catwalks around the interior periphery, as well as moveable seating for different configurations.

The afternoon started with a panel discussion incorporating members of CHS and members of Circus Now, a non-profit community organization dedicated to supporting the evolution of circus in America. Jan Rok Achard (former Director of the National Circus School of Montreal), Patrick LeRoux (Professor, Concordia University), Duncan Wall (National Director, Circus Now), Al Stencell (Circus Historical Society), Andreane Leclerc (contortionist & Artistic Director, Nadère arts vivants), Brian Liddicoat (circus manager), and Jeff Jenkins (Artistic Director, Midnight Circus) shed light on their perceptions of trends and philosophies of contemporary circus performers as well as efforts of



A little down time in the Library of the National Circus School.

photo by Ray Gronso

their group to support a renewed interest in the circus arts across North America. The conversation ranged broadly as the panelists, including CHS members Al Stencell and Brian Liddicoat, grappled with the comparison and contrast of classical circus and the present evolving formats. The venue was the tent belonging to the Chicago-based Midnight Circus, owned by Jeff Jenkins and his wife. It was one of the shows incorporated into the Montreal circus festival and was visited by several registrants on their own time.

The last tour of the day was a tour of Montreal's National Circus School. Serving over 150 students from around the world, the school trains its students in both the rigors of athletic skills necessary for circus performance as well as the aesthetics of presentation which can make an act stand apart. The goal is to graduate students with a prepared and finely tuned act that can launch their professional careers.



The groups had time to visit an exhibit of pieces from the Pascal Jacobs circus collection at TOHU.

photo by Ray Gronso



Maureen Brundale introducing the Thayer Prize winner.

photo by Deborah Walk



Duncan Wall received the 2014 Thayer Prize honoring his contribution to writing on circus history.

photo by Deborah Walk



The Artistic Directors and performers of 7 Fingers after their evening show.
photo by Ray Gronso



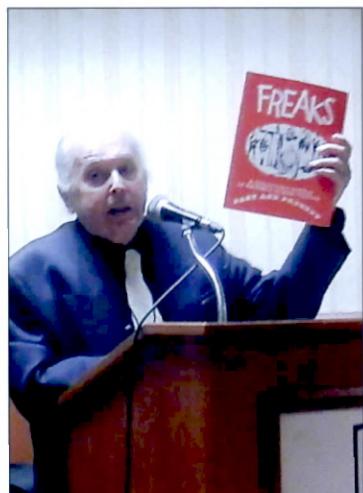
The auction was filled with a number of great posters and other circus ephemera.
photo by Deborah Walk

The tour of the school concluded in their comprehensive library and archives, under the care of Anna-Karyna Barlati. The collection of more than 10,000 items includes classical circus materials that serve to inspire new productions, as well as reference materials on dance and other arts that are blended into the new shows. The library director's vibrant enthusiasm was inspiring for those who think that libraries are sullen places of quiet learning. In gratitude for the warm hospitality, on behalf of CHS, President Deborah Walk presented the National Circus School's library with a copy of the rare book, *Life Story of the Ringling Brothers*, published by R. R. Donnelly and Sons in 1900.

The evening was occupied with a performance by Seven Fingers at TOHU. It was a show presented by veterans of the circus training school, showcasing the special efforts of seven different people. A bonus was the post-show oppor-

tunity to meet and greet with the seven in a local outdoor bistro, where they conversed with audience members. The entire day was so inspiring that the conversation on the bus ride back to the hotel was near deafening.

Saturday was largely given over to personal pursuits, including other Circus Arts Festival activities and the attractions of Montreal while the CHS board conducted a meeting to discuss issues critical to the future of CHS. The evening was a two ring feature, the banquet followed by the annual auction. The highlight of the dinner was the awarding of the 2014 Stuart Thayer Prize to Duncan Wall, whose book, *Ordinary Acrobat*, was named by others as one of the ten best non-fiction books of the year. Wall's acceptance speech made a strong case for the acceptance of new circus forms while sustaining the depth and breadth of knowledge of the classical circus. As he declared, "The circus is the future." **BW**



Giovanni Iuliani holds one of his several books.

photo by Ray Gronso



After the Cirque du Soleil show.

photo by Deborah Walk

NOBLE SAVAGES AND AFRICAN NATIVES:

Representations of Race in Outdoor Entertainment 1860-1930

by Marcy W. Murray with images from the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Figure 1. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey: Tribe of Genuine Ubangi Savages, Illinois Litho, 1930.

"At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace the savage races throughout the world"

—Charles Darwin

Introduction

Outdoor entertainments—the circus and Wild West show specifically—played a significant role in creating American society's paradoxical ideas on ethnicity such as the Dangerous/Noble Savage and the Powerful/Child-

ish Warrior. This role was most prominent between 1860 and 1930 when the tented show was in its heyday. This time period "coincided with what others variously called the Age of Darwin, the Age of Essentialism, and the Age of African Exploration [... as psychologist Robert Guthrie claims, the push] was to 'question anew the relationship of man to the 'lower animals.'"¹ The writings of Charles Darwin and the theories presented by them popularized the idea "that late-Victorian white masculinity was the most advanced product of evolution."² Theories such as these "contended Euro American women and 'primitives' remained mentally and

emotionally fixed in lower ancestral stages of evolution.”³ These ideas “were embraced by middle-to-upper class, white, American men to assuage their anxieties concerning a growing immigrant class, physical softness from urban lifestyles, and freed slaves. Further, this ‘Crisis of Masculinity’ caused many middle-classed men to embrace and admire ‘ideals of toughness and physical strength.’”⁴ This ideal was epitomized by men like Eugene Sandow and Theodore Roosevelt.

In this atmosphere, the exhibition of non-white persons became a common and profitable business. In circuses and Wild West shows, “cultural ‘others’ were employed to perform their ‘cultural otherness’ for the Anglo-American [...] audience. [These performances...] served to promote Western colonial domination by configuring non-white cultures as [lacking] discipline, civilization, and industry.”⁵ The presentation of these ‘cultural others’ by outdoor entertainment establishments often reinforced the theories of Darwin. Janet Davis claims, “the circus itself functioned as a popular discourse that reinforced the superiority of white ‘native’ American (i.e. Anglo American) culture and promoted American exceptionalism on the world stage.”⁶ Because these outdoor entertainments presented and advertised their productions as educational

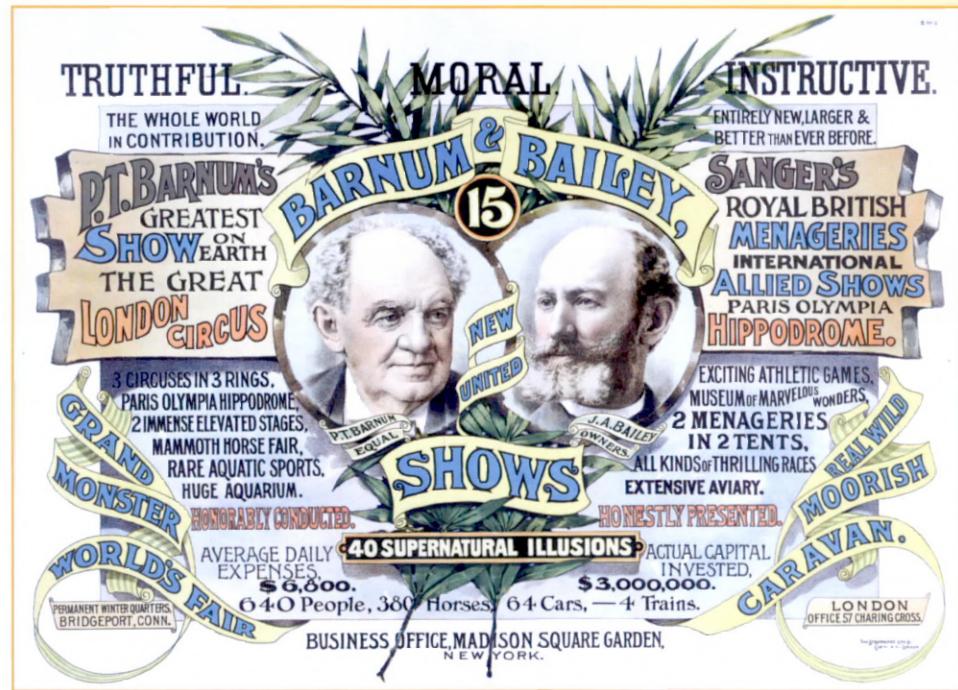


Figure 2. Barnum & Bailey: *Truthful, Moral, Instructive*, printed by Strobridge Lithographing Co., 1889.

and authentic, they actively shaped the public’s understanding of other races and cultures.

Creating an Educational and Authentic Display

There is no disputing the role that marketing and advertising played in the success of American outdoor entertainments. Shows were advertised through newspaper advertisements and programs, but the bulk of the marketing

expense went towards colorful posters and the cost of putting them up. Fred D. Pfening, Jr. claims, “The circus has made greater use of illustrated posters for advertising purposes than any other type of amusement or business enterprise”. Though there is little doubt that these advertisements utilized dramatic images and textual hyperbole, one important message contained in many of these advertisements was the declaration of the exhibitions as authentic and educational. Harvey Blume points out that, “the nineteenth century’s twin fixations [were] authenticity and showmanship, realism and display.”⁷

This paradoxical consumer need is illustrated in many advertisements for outdoor entertainments. For example, the 1889 Strobridge poster for the Barnum & Bailey New United Shows [Figure 2] claims among other things,

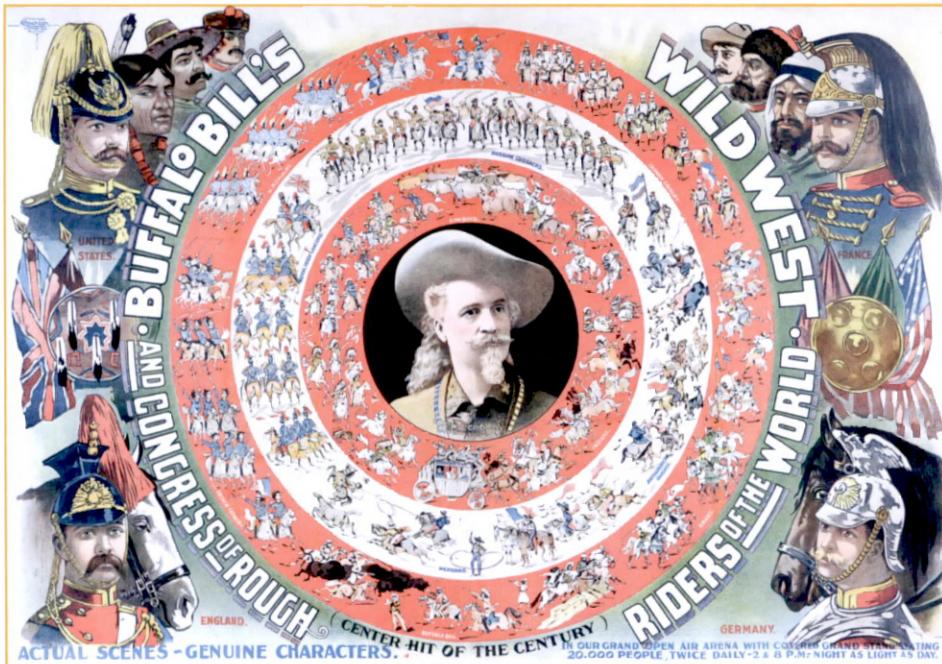


Figure 3. Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders, Courier Litho. Co., 1896.

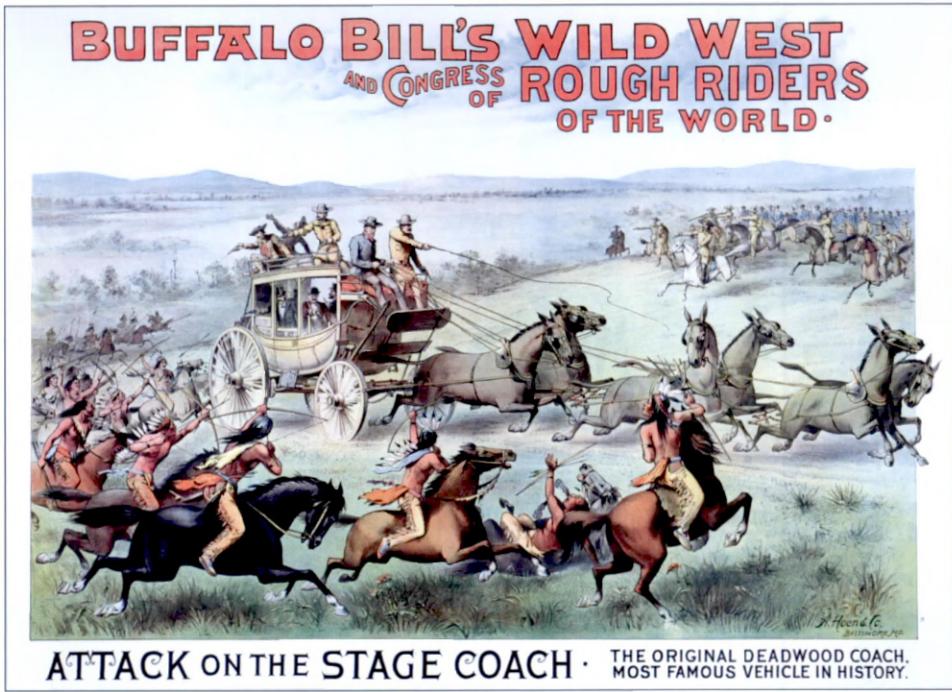


Figure 4. Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders, A. Hoen & Co., circa 1894.

to be "honorably conducted" and "honestly presented". The poster is riddled with verbal details of the show and its logistics including daily expenses, capital invested, the number of people, horses, cars, and trains used. The top of the poster provided the audience assurance that the show is "truthful, moral, and instructive".

In the Buffalo Bill advertisement [Figure 3], the focus is placed on the various nationalities presented in his "Congress of Rough Riders of the World". To add to the authenticity, these performers are depicted in their national costumes; they are riding with wild abandon. The audience is promised, "Wild Rivalries of Savage, Barbarous, and Civilized Races". The implied realism added to the excitement.

Programs sold at these shows provided further evidence of the exhibits' realism. For example, Barnum & Bailey's Route Book Season of 1894, lists two lecturers, Frank F. Frost and Thomas G. Scott, under its Ethnological Congress entry. The idea that the audience would receive educational information about the "exhibits" of the Ethnological Congress is thereby implied. These lecturers were often old circus men and not necessarily experts on the exhibits. The program describes the Ethnological Congress itself in great detail:

All religions and all races were represented as well as others of every hue and complexion, and still others of mild and timid natures, and again others of ferocious mien and bearing. Cannibals and Christians, warriors and tillers of the soil, sailors, fishermen; every kind of human be-

ing from almost every country on earth was exhibited to the wonder of the visitors [...] nearly all the natives were accompanied by their women, wives and families who brought with them all the domestic utensils used when in their native countries, while the men came with their weapons of war and the hunt, their boats, tents, canoes and other paraphernalia so that a complete and most comprehensive idea could easily be had at a glance of just how these people lived when in their own countries.⁸

Thus Barnum and Bailey established that not only were the people that populated their Congress authentic, but so were the props used in the exhibition. The exhibit was so complete that the audience had only to glance at it to get a comprehensive idea of the culture being presented.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show's program provided educational briefs on topics such as: Ghost Dancers, On a Mustang, Colonel Royall's Wagon, The Buffalo, The Bow and Ar-

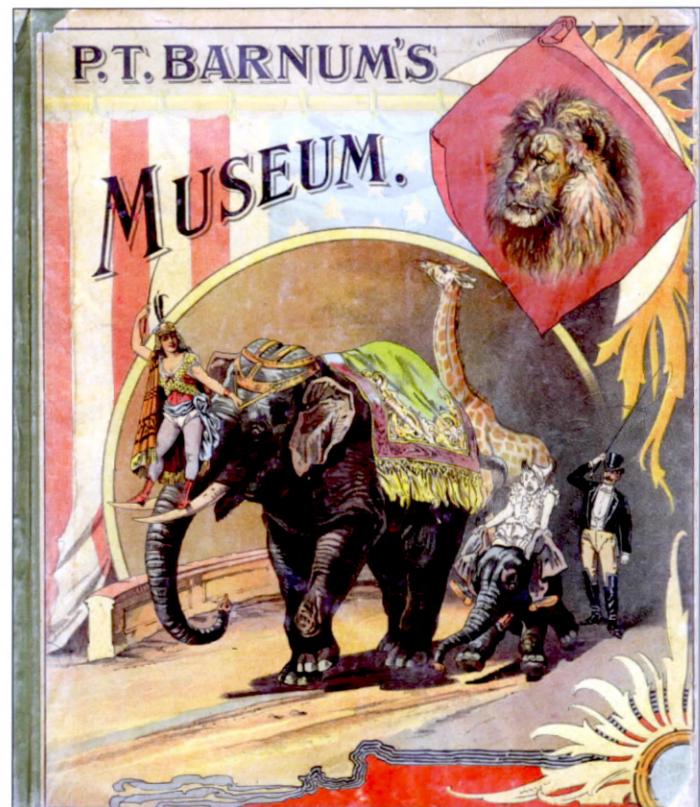


Figure 5. Cover of P. T. Barnum's Children's Book, 1888.

row, and *The Cowboy* (1893). In the 1895 program, there is an introduction titled, “Education and Amusement—How They Go Hand in Hand” that claims, “Amusement [...] is a great factor in the development of the national character [...] The ideals of the people are shaped, and their sentiments formed, to a large extent, by popular amusements.” The program goes on to claim that because the performers in the Buffalo Bill show are authentic and *actually played roles in the events being re-enacted*, “Truth is stamped upon its every act.” This idea is conveyed by the Buffalo Bill Wild West poster that presents images of one of his re-enactments in which the Indians attack a wagon train of white settlers [Figure 4].

The Buffalo Bill show’s program often quoted expert opinions and testimonials to further support its claims of academic merit and realism. An 1899 Buffalo Bill program quotes newspaper editor and magazine writer, Murat Halstead, “It is somebody’s crime if all the children do not see Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Inasmuch that of all public exhibitions there have been none in the past to compare in ‘educational value’ with it, every thoughtful parent ought to regard it as a duty to have the children attend it.”⁹ The implications are clear: this show was academically and culturally important for the American child.

Because the ultimate goal was to make a profit, programs and advertisements such as these addressed the needs of the consumer: “Circus proprietors marketed their shows in order to tap growing public curiosity about foreign lands and the relationship between human beings and animals.”¹⁰ The consumers’ curiosity would not be sated by flim-flam and humbug; they wanted realism and the circus and Wild West show delivered. By insisting that their exhibits were educational, these proprietors added validity to the show.

In addition to advertising, P. T. Barnum also created and sold a children’s book titled, *P. T. Barnum’s Circus Museum and Menagerie: Text and Illustrations Arranged for Little People by P. T. Barnum and Sarah J. Burke* [Figure 5]. This book depicted Barnum introducing three youngsters to all the curious people and animals of his show.

Barnum is represented as an important, but kindly and instructive man. The narrator wonders, “why Mr. Barnum was so very fond of the Von Tassel children [he] who had himself been entertained by Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington [...] I do not know, but certain it is that he looked perfectly radiant as he conducted the three children....” In the book, Barnum knowledgeably discusses Cuban bullfights, the deceased Tom Thumb, and his current exhibitions (beautifully illustrated) including a Chinese giant, Australian bushmen [Figure 6], Nubians, and Afghan Chiefs. It is an educational journey behind the scenes of Barnum’s wondrous show.

The newspaper advertisements used for these outdoor amusements were equally insistent on the realistic

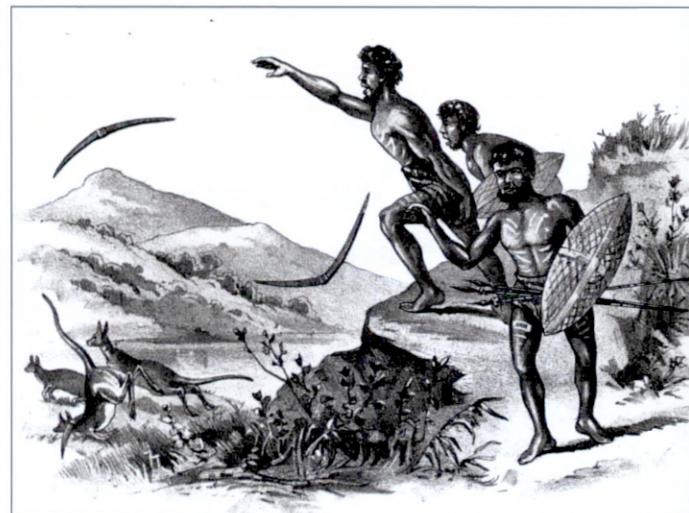


Figure 6. Australian Bushmen depicted in P. T. Barnum’s Circus Museum, 1888.

and educational quality of the shows. For example, Shillingburg claims that an ad on the front page of the *Brooklyn Eagle* on May 15, 1884 boasted of the circus having an Immense Ethnological Congress of Strange and Savage Tribes. The ad continued:

The greatest assembly of curious human beings ever seen together on earth. Collected only after three years [of] constant and persistent researches in almost every portion of the known world. Of incalculable benefit to scientists and naturalists, and a never ceasing source of wonderment to ladies, children, and the adult humanity of the country.

Barnum and Bailey’s claim that their circus’ Ethnological Congress was “of incalculable benefit to scientists and naturalists”, not only implied legitimacy and academic merit, but novelties never before seen on American soil. In addition to the two elements of authenticity and education, the circus and the Wild West shows also claimed that many of the exhibited peoples were members of vanishing cultures.

Conquered, Captured, and Vanishing Tribes

The circus often employed the idea of a captured and rare exhibit that would soon vanish—the last of its kind. This is seen in the 1901 Ringling Bros.’ promotion of a giraffe [Figure 7] complete with hyperbolic text such as: “Secured at the Cost of a Fortune.” “Only Giraffe known to exist in the entire world,” and “when he is gone the Giraffe will be extinct.”¹¹

This ploy was employed by both the circus and the Wild West show when describing their Ethnological ‘Exhibits’. In this manner, the Ethnological Congress was presented as evidence of the American/white male’s superiority. As predicted by Darwin, the civilized races of man were well on

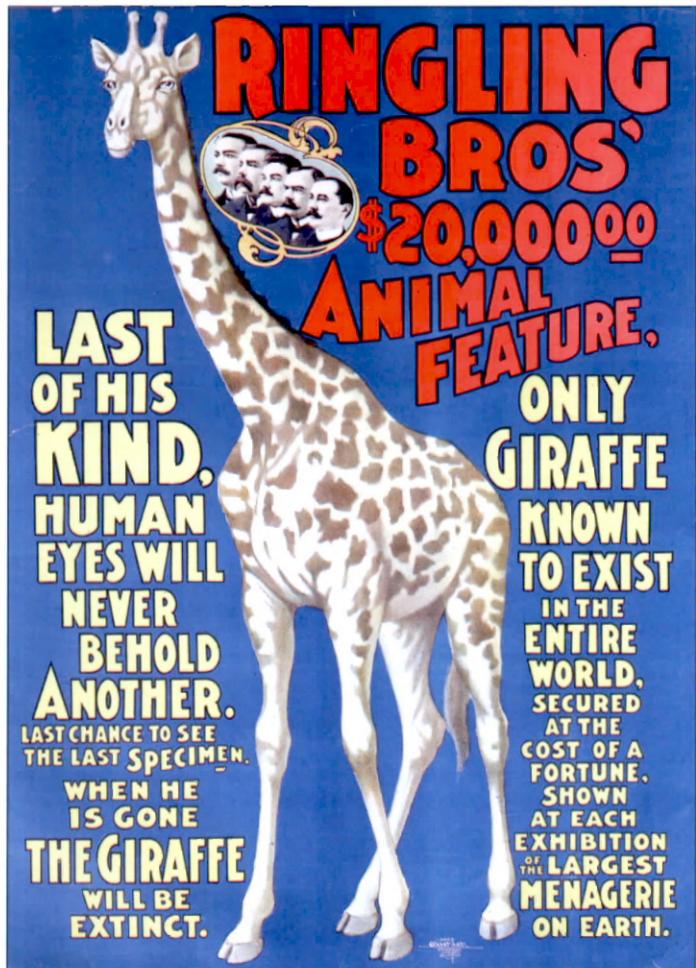


Figure 7. Ringling Bros' \$20,000 Animal Feature, printed by Courier Co., 1901.

their way to exterminate, and replace the savage races of the world. The people exhibited in the Circus' Ethnological Congress were exhibited in "instructive" forums in which one could examine [...] human beings from countries like China, Cuba, and the Philippines, places where American investors, missionaries, and traders were beginning to consolidate their capital and political control."¹² Although these displays were evidence of the white man's superiority, they were, at the same time, pieces of a disappearing frontier which was in many ways to be mourned.

In a 1900 program, Buffalo Bill's Wild West show introduced "Strange People from Our New Possessions". The paragraph that follows informs the audience:

"that our special agent [was] sent to Porto [sic] Rico, and the Sandwich and the Philippine Islands [...] to secure the finest representatives of the strange and interesting aborigines of the West Indies and the intermediate and remote Pacific isles, now grouped by the fate of war, the hands of progress and the conquering march of civilization under Old Glory's protecting folds."¹³

The program implied both the United States' Imperialism and paternal arms that have embraced these people and will guard them from war, and invite them to join progress and civilization. Col. Cody extends this paternalism as he "begs now to, for the first time, cordially introduce them [the aborigines] to his and their future fellow-countrymen."¹⁴ This is a vastly different presentation than that of the Native Americans travelling with the same show.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show Indians were representatives of a conquered and vanishing race. The show presented dramatic re-enactments of Indians attacking wagon caravans and settler cabins only to be foiled by "the king of scouts" leading his friends to the rescue. The show also presented an "Indian Village" described in the 1895 program, "Here is the home life vividly realized of a great nomadic race which once owned a continent, and which in a few years more will be numbered with the lost tribes of antiquity." These excerpts illustrate the show's depiction of the defeat of the Indian race as well as its fade into extinction. The program also clearly indicates that the Indians are not free agents. An 1893 program contains an editorial from the *New York Sun* that begins, "The permission granted by the Interior department to Buffalo Bill to engage 100 Sioux Indians [...] is a great victory for Bill" and an 1899 program discusses "the Sioux chiefs and braves whom the Government has entrusted to Col. Cody's care for exhibition."¹⁵ The fact that the Indians are not free agents is further evidenced



Figure 8. Wild Indians depicted in P.T. Barnum's Circus, 1888.

in newspaper reports about them.

A headline from *The New York Times* exclaimed that, "Major Burke Tells how [...] "they [the Indians] are kept from drinking and fighting" and discusses the use of their peers to police them. These police were given extra pay in exchange for their supervision of their peers.

The article goes on to inform the reader of the remarkable pacifying and educational influence civilization has had upon the Indian. It also declares, "even when not performing they wear Native Dress". This might seem an oddity until one considers that under the rules of the U.S. Interior Department, the conquered Indians lost the privilege of tribal dress, language, religion, and dance. Delaney points out that many of these Indians "welcomed the opportunity to travel with Cody, thereby freeing themselves for six months each year from the degrading confines of the reservations where they were forbidden to wear tribal dress, hunt, or dance."¹⁶ Buffalo Bill's presentation of the Indians was often met with opposition from the Reformists Progressives:

Reformist Progressives claimed the Show celebrated Indian savagery through the portrayal of roving tribes on the Plains. Having been defeated by the military and confined to reservations, Reformists hoped that their image of Indians as assimilated into American culture would prevail in the public mind... The Show only served to remove Indians from the welfare of the government and prevent Progressive reform. Cody agreed with Reformists in their general sentiment that Indians need to adapt, but claimed that natural virtues of Indians would create honorable, hard-working, Christian citizens—that they would defend their new American culture as vigorously as they de-

fended their traditional culture. Furthermore, when Show Indians returned to reservations having witnessed American and European society, they would serve as advocates for progress among their people.¹⁷

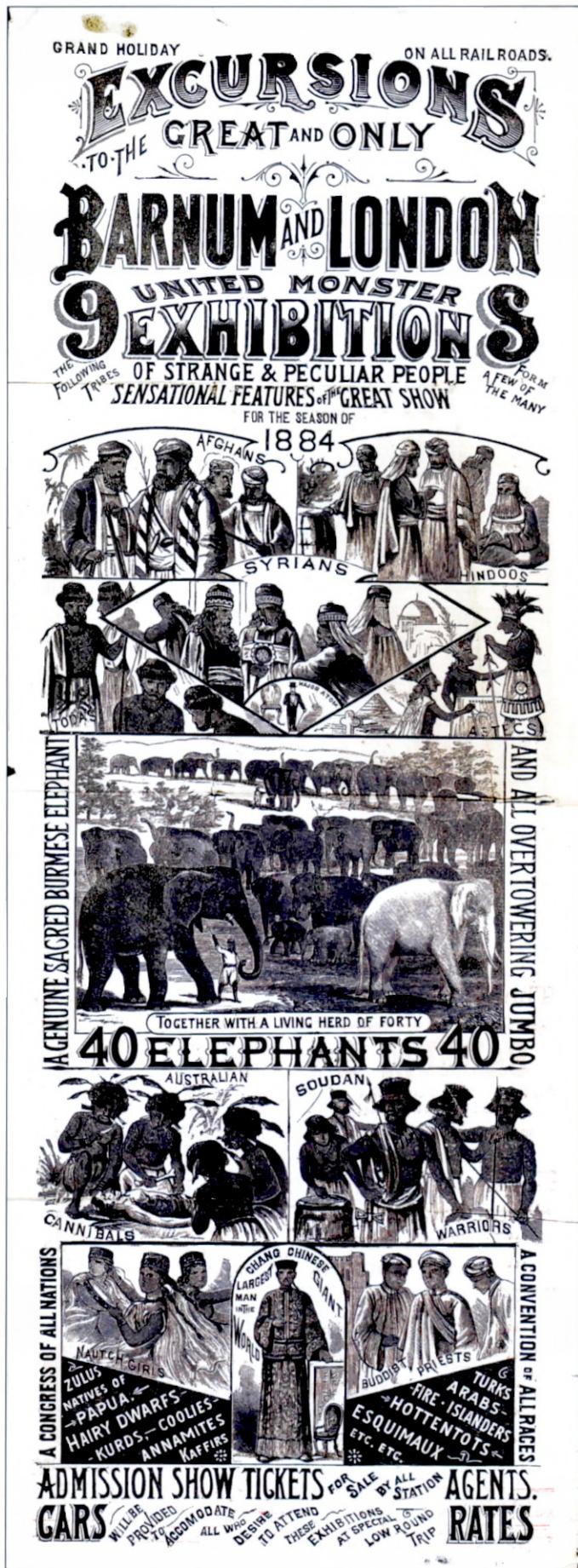
In addition, the Wild West show's representation of the Indian was simultaneously dangerous, as depicted by re-enactments of them attacking white settlers and child-like implied by their being contractually bound to "obey orders, refrain from all drinking, gambling, and fighting."¹⁸ Though contradictory, this representation fit into the ideals and expectations of the American audience.

P. T. Barnum's circus also had an exhibition that featured American Natives. The impression the "Wild Indian Riders" have upon Barnum's young guests is discussed in his book, *P. T. Barnum's Circus Museum and Menagerie: Text and Illustrations Arranged for Little People*: "the eyes of the Indians were bright and their cruel looking tomahawks frightened Gay [...] the squaws seemed to be dull and unhappy [...] but Gay forgot her fear when the little papoose [...] passed close. [She] said that it opened its eyes and smiled at her, but Indian babies are not merry, so perhaps Gay only imagined it." The image presented of Barnum's Indians is quite different than those of Buffalo Bill. Barnum's male Indians are fierce and frightening [Figure 8], while the female and infant Indians are dull and unhappy.

Overall, Native Americans were viewed as a once fearsome, savage, primitive, and noble people now conquered and tamed by the civilization. Though objects of wonder and often pity, for the most part, they escaped being viewed as oddities, animalistic, and objects of ridicule. This is not true of many of the other "savage races" displayed in Ethnological Congresses.



Figure 9. Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth, Grand Ethnological Congress, printed by Strobridge, 1894.



The Other: Animals and Ridiculous Savages

John Straussbaugh asserts that newspaper writers often viewed "Africans as far as humans could possibly be from White Civilization [he cites a *New York Times* writer's description of the Ethnological Congress' African villagers]: 'Nothing else I have seen conveys such an impression of wild savagery [...] however] they did not impress one as wicked or vicious."¹⁹ This likening of the people/exhibits of the Ethnological Congress, especially those from Africa, to animals was a common trope.

Shane Peacock asserts that in the Barnum show of 1882, Zulus were often exhibited in a manner that likened them to animals citing two examples: the Zulus featured in races against horses and the route book's description of the birth of a Zulu child that read: "Arrival into the world of the first American Zulu born in captivity, to use a Jumbonian expression."²⁰ The equation of Africans to animals was not limited to the circus or Wild West show. For example, in 1906, the Bronx Zoo exhibited a Congolese pygmy named Ota Benga in a cage in its monkey house.

Although Bluford Adams (and others) argue that the placement of the Ethnological Congress in the circus' menagerie space equated its members with animals and "supported the show's depiction of them as 'Bestial,'" many circus historians oppose this notion and argue that the menagerie offered an area in which audiences could observe the non-westerners at a more leisurely pace not afforded in the "freak tent" or in the main circus tent [Figure 9].²¹

Because the members of the Ethnological Congress were so culturally different from their American audience, they were often looked upon as human oddities. For example, an 1894 newspaper article stated, "After the boomerang throwing was over the Australians gave a dance. Which the truthful Mr. Frost insisted always prefaced a feast upon a roasted missionary."²² The Mr. Frost referenced is identified as the manager and interpreter for the group. Another example is seen in the Barnum & London Circus bill that identifies their exhibition of "strange and peculiar people." [Figure 10]

The one particular group of the ethnological curiosities that seemed to garner the most attention and ridicule was the Ubangis.²³ Newspaper articles about the Ubangis consistently ridiculed them. For example, the *New York Times* reported the group's joining the circus. The headlines read: "African Beauties here to Join the Circus: Eight Duck-Lipped Women and Four Men Arrive." The article states that "beauty is a matter of geography" and goes on to relate the origin of the lip-disks —the Ubangis decided to make their women homely so that they would no longer be stolen by bands of pirates, but over

Figure 10. Barnum & London herald for the 1884 Ethnological Congress.

time, the disks became the mark of beauty for their people. On 7 April 1930, the *New York Times* reported that one of the Ubangi women had misplaced her lower lip disk and authorities were experimenting with phonograph records as replacements.²⁴ And on 27 April 1930, the *New York Times* wrote that the Ubangis were excited to be travelling to Boston as “they learned through a tribal underground channel that elephant ears may be procured in Boston [as replacements for] their drum heads.”²⁵ These hype news stories and the posters came directly from circus PR departments; they advertised the Ubangis as “monster-mouthing savages” to grab their audience’s attention. It should be noted that, though the 1930 advertisements claimed an “educational” aspect to the exhibit [Figure 11], what was emphasized was its shock value.

Outdoor entertainments introduced American audiences to many cultures from many lands. The advertisements and programs that promoted these ethnological displays often played to the Western need to feel superior and presented the members of their exhibits as savage, conquered, uncivilized, and even ridiculous. However, it should be noted that these shows also familiarized American audiences with legitimate features of unusual and previously unknown cultures. In the end, many aspects of the displays in these shows were indeed educational and helped to shrink borders. **BW**

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10. Davis, “Spectacles” 40.
11. It should be noted that the Ringling Bros. used this art for less than a full season, recognizing that it constituted false advertising.
12. Davis, “Spectacles” 41.
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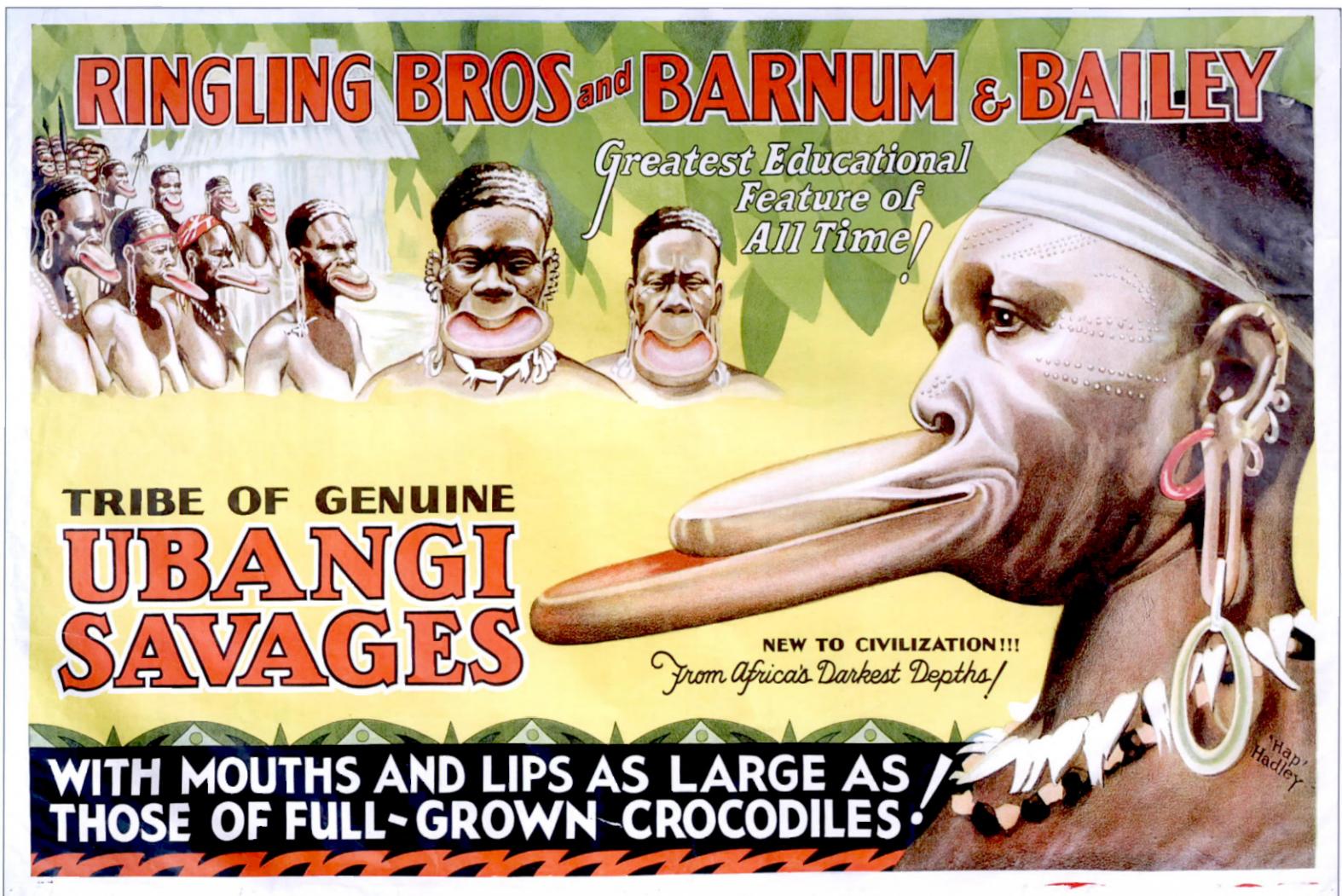
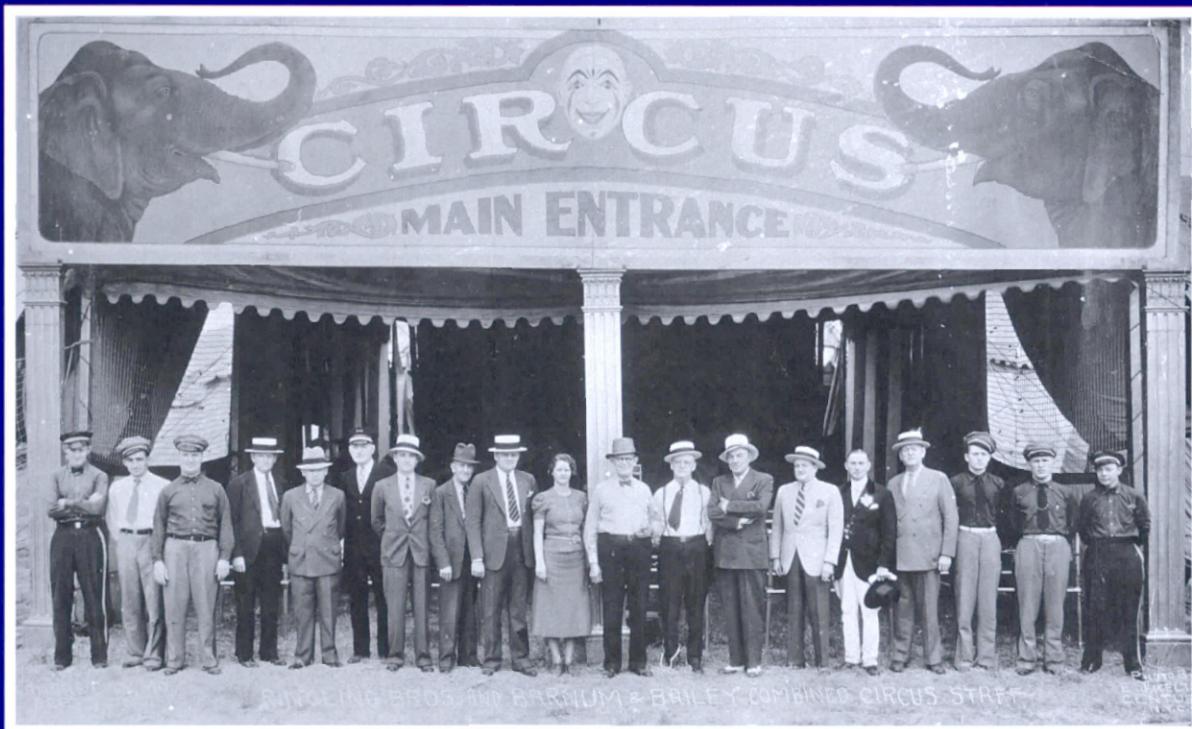


Figure 11. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey: Tribe of Genuine Ubangi Savages, Illinois Litho, 1930.

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Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Staff, Edward Kelty, 1937.

The Ringling Museum

2013

Ringmaster

Richard J. Reynolds III, Paul Ingrassia, William Fox, Wilbur Schmidt, Ron Erdy, Bob Cline, John E. Hart, Jr.

Concessionaire

John F. Thieme, Charles Bellati, Jim Elliott, Donald McGarvey, Charles Hanson, Paul Gutheil,
William Henry Carroll II, James Greenberg, Deborah Walk

Contributing

Dave Price, Jack T. Painter, Jim Kieffer, Henry Bush, Robert Sabia, Dominic Yodice, James Stegall, James DePiro,
William Wandrey, Jr., Michael Means, Dr. Don Seelinger, J. Kurt Spence, David Carlyon, Wayne McCary, Todd Woolf,
Frederick Grabske, Lynden Lyman, Carl Miller, James Purdue, M. Lane Talbert, Kevin Patton Ph.D., Michael Dreiling,
Tim Bessignano, Scot Silzer, Robert Momyer, Wilfred Hevey, Don L. Cash, Ray Henderson, John Kramer, Paul K. Pugh,
Joseph Crawford, Fred J. Berger, Tom Wilds, Gordon G. Fee, John Wohlwend, Bob Yerkes, Rafael Hernandez, Warren Zapol,
Susan Vogel, Alan Campbell, John Polacsek, Evelyn Riker, Paul Holley, Pamela Snyder, Mark Schlemmer

Sustaining

Norman H. Pike, Charles L. Barrett, David P. Orr, Brian Liddicoat, Greg Parkinson, Larry D. Brage, Henry Francis Hicks, Jr.,
Robert Kitchen, William S. Galloway, Jr., David Liggett, William Slout, Judith Daykin, Giovanni Iuliani, E. Clark Beurlen,
Niles Calhoun, Douglas Percy, Pete Adams, Micheal Worswick, Joseph Rogers, Ronald Spielbauer, Msgr. Charles Schluter,
Stephen Partyka, Doug Konkle, Nick Wilkins, Dave Gartler, John B. Collins, Mark Blanchette, Phil Rager, Wayne Scheiner,
Richard Hull, Tony Wood, Terry Allread, Richard Burch, Dave Gruesz, Pat Long, Dan Beach, Pat Grahm, Bill English,
Peter Newland, Larry Cimino, Chester Cable, Ryan Easley, Jennifer Lemmer Posey, Judith Griffin, Darrel Hawkins,
Dale Williams, Brian Morrissey, Elizabeth Frank, Jim Royal, Guy Fiorenza, Gordon E. Turner, Ralph Skidmore, Sr.,
Paul A. Bookter, Edwin S. Roth, Edward C. Todd

John Ringling's 1930 Circus Enterprises

by John Polacsek

**Ringling-Barnum, Al. G. Barnes, Hagenbeck-Wallace,
John Robinson's, Sells Floto, Sparks**

After the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus's evening performance at Jacksonville, Florida, on October 19, 1929, John Ringling called Pat Valdo to his private railroad car. Six weeks earlier Ringling had purchased the American Circus Corporation for \$1.9 million and was making plans for the 1930 season in which he would operate six circuses: Ringling-Barnum, Al. G. Barnes, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson's, Sells Floto, and Sparks. Ringling told Valdo: "Pat, we want to take you out of the big top. You'll get a hike in pay and head a new circus portfolio. You're the director of personnel. Handle the job any way you please."¹ Suddenly, Valdo was the personnel manager for six circuses.

Correspondence in the Zweifel Archives in Orlando, Florida and additional copies from the Pfening Archives in Columbus,

Ohio shed light on the running of Ringling's five newly acquired circuses in 1929 and 1930. Through letters and telegrams to and from John Ringling, Pat Valdo, and the managers of the newly acquired circuses, it is possible to observe the shaping of a circus season under Ringling's management. His particular interest in incorporating features as midgets, animals on spinning tables, the broom illusion, the Monge Troupe, and high wire acts under-



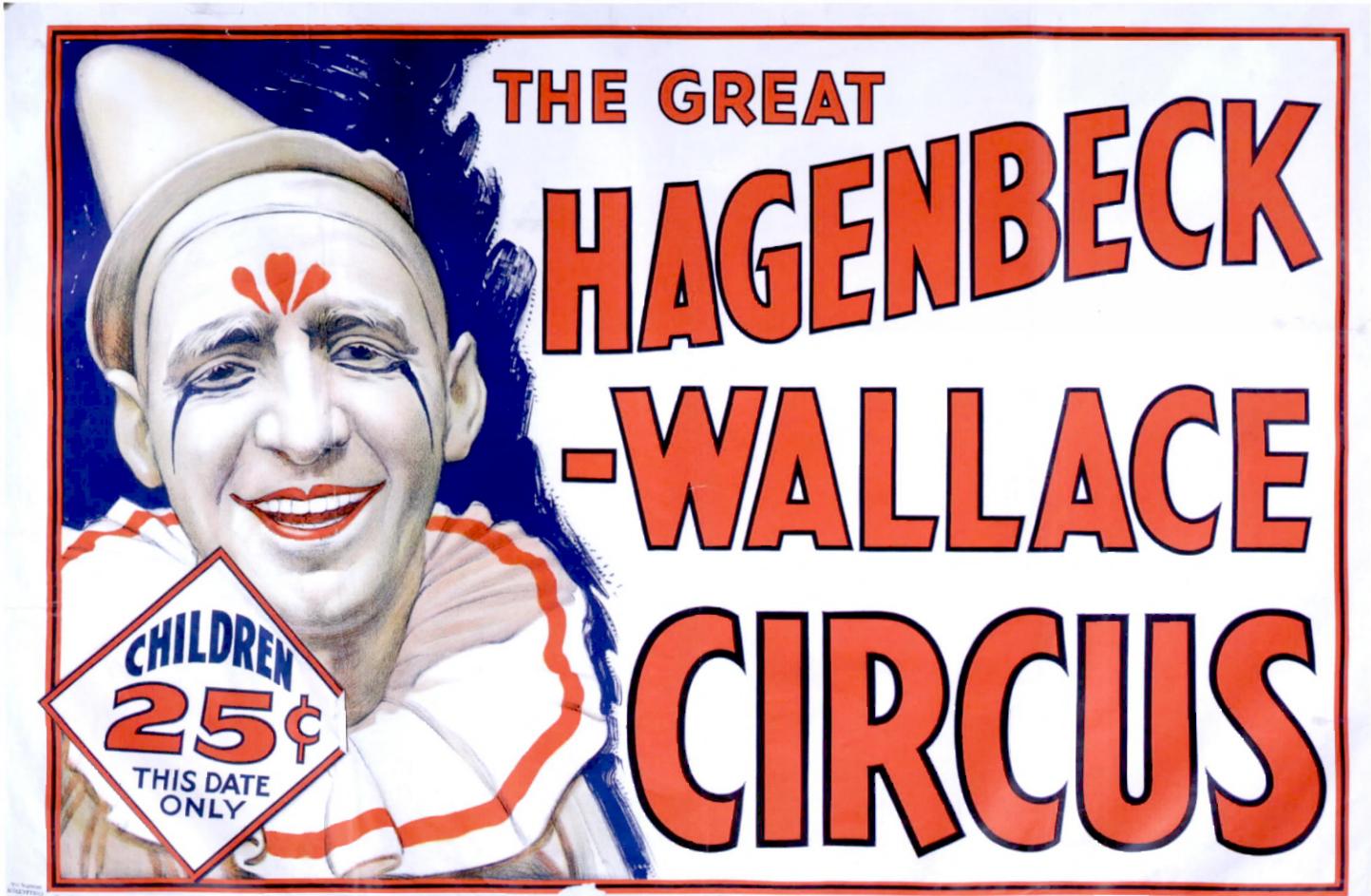
John Ringling photographed in Fort Worth, Texas. The Ringling Museum



John Ringling, Pat Valdo, and Fred Bradna on the circus lot in 1924.
Courtesy of The Circus Blog

line Ringling's unique sense of what would make for a good show. Through these correspondences, a unique view of John Ringling's micromanagement of his tented empire becomes clear.

Thanks to John Zweifel and Fred D. Pfening Jr. for providing a unique insight into John Ringling's mind and how he organized a tremendous galaxy of talent under the big tops in 1930.



This 1930s era poster used Pat Valdo's iconic clown face.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Patrick Valdo

Born Patrick Francis Fitzgerald in Binghamton, New York in 1881, Patrick entered the circus business as a candy butcher on the Walter L. Main Circus. A few months later he joined John Robinson's as an apprentice clown. There he took the name Valdo and began working on a number of gags that would be used for decades after, such as the midget clown fire brigade. In 1904 the young clown joined the Ringling show. Over the next several years, Valdo clowned on Ringling, Barnum & Bailey (1908), Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus (1912), and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1921-1923). In 1914 he married Laura Meers, a performer in a family wire act and, later, with the Davenport riding act. With Laura's brother, they would form a wire act known as Valdo, Meers & Valdo. Their act would appear on the 1919 combined Ringling show.

In 1923 Valdo was appointed Assistant Director of

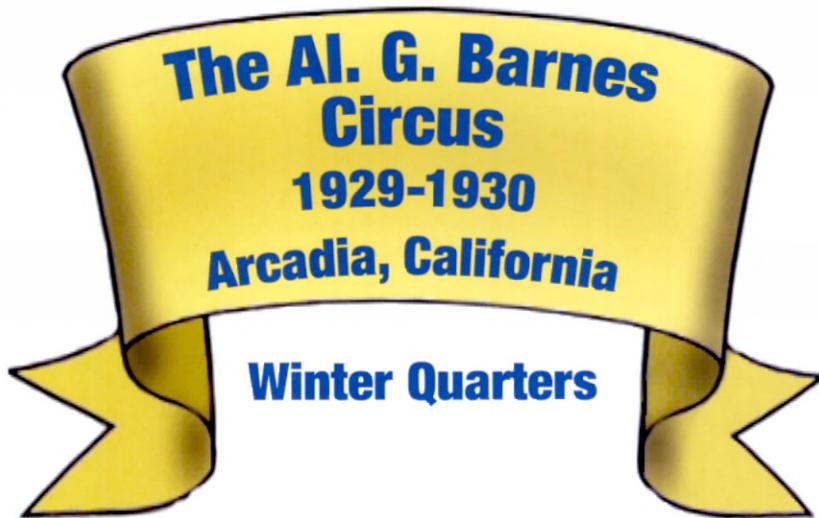


Valdo as a rising circus executive.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

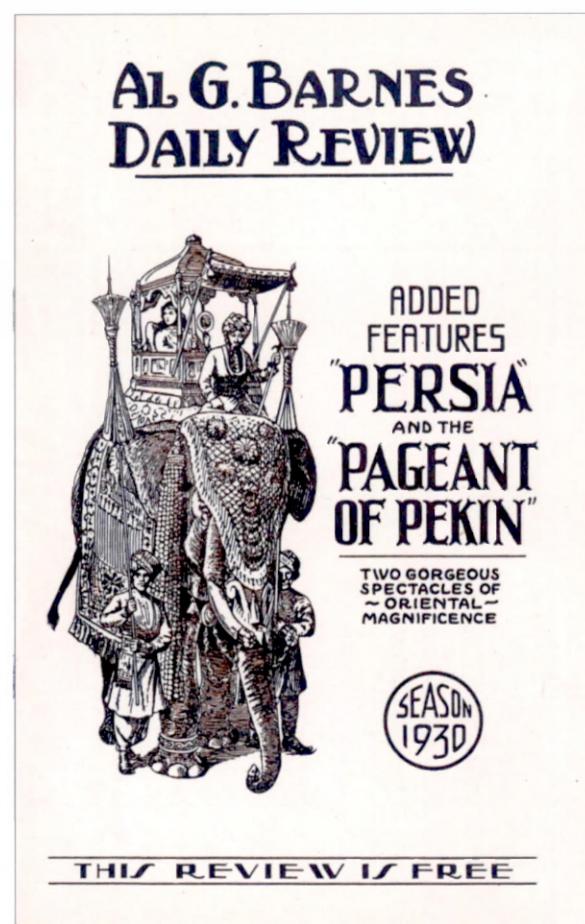
Performance and gave up clowning to work with Fred Bradna. When he became Supervisor of Performers and Personnel for the Ringling properties, reporting directly to John Ringling in 1929, Pat Valdo and his wife moved to Sarasota, Florida. Along with coordinating the staging of the Ringling owned shows, Valdo also began scouting for new talent, traveling abroad for this purpose in 1932 for the first time. The Cristiani Family, the Naitto sisters, and the Otari Troupe were among the talent Valdo found on his travels. Years later he would sign Emmett Kelly to the Ringling show. Valdo worked between the personnel and the circus management and displayed great competence in balancing such a difficult position.

In 1969, Pat Valdo was named as the first Director Emeritus of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. He died the following year in Sarasota, having devoted almost seventy years to the business. Irvin Feld said of Valdo: "He probably knew more about the circus business than any other man in the world."



Almost immediately, there was some concern regarding trained seals which ultimately ended up in the lap of Sylvester L. "Buster" Cronin, manager of the Al. G. Barnes Circus that was in a new California winter quarters. The West Coast was an ideal place to obtain seals, train them, and then ship them to the other circuses that needed new stock. John Ringling, Pat Valdo, and "Buster" Cronin all consulted on the deals to supply as well as the question of who was to present the act, and what was to be their salary.

E. F. Firth, who had the seal act on Sparks Circus in 1929 started the ball rolling when he wrote Pat Valdo on November 13, 1929 from Macon, Georgia, winter home of the Sparks show: "It has been a week and three days since we closed and up to now have received no word from you or Mr. Ringling in regards to what is to be done concerning new seals for me. I have everything ready to work and am waiting. My promise to you expires next Sunday the 17th. Should I not hear from you or see Mr. Ringling by then, I will be forced to leave as conditions here are not the same as they were last year with me, and furthermore I am keeping my Mrs. back in her plans, waiting for my answer. Now Mr.



Cover for the Al. G. Barnes program of 1930.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Ringling surely knows by now if he wants a seal act over here or not, and if so, I should have animals by now or at least be on their way to accomplish anything for next season. Please get in touch with him at once and find out one way or the other for me. I assure you that I have done my best by you. Trusting to hear from you by Saturday by wire."

A week after Firth's November 17th deadline, Henry B. Gentry, the Sparks Show manager, sent Valdo a telegram



Sylvester L. 'Buster' Cronin

Sylvester Cronin was born in Hartford City, Indiana in 1880. He entered the entertainment business in 1906, working with a moving picture show in Peru and Goshen, Indiana. His first circus experience came on the Walter L. Main Circus where he worked cookhouse and elephants. The following year he was on the William P. Hall Circus and then the Wallace Circus. Cronin spent 17 years with the Mugivan & Bowers circus organization, managing Hagenbeck-Wallace under Jerry Mugivan and Sells Floto under Zack Terrell. Cronin also handled the sale of advertising banners on the John Robinson's Circus from 1915 – 1925. He served as Manager of the Al. G. Barnes Circus for the 1929 and 1930 seasons. In the 1940s he managed the Clyde Beatty show. In 1944 he organized his own, European style circus. Buster Cronin died in Los Angeles in 1958.

Sylvester "Buster" Cronin, undated.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Edward Kelty photograph of the 1930 Al. G. Barnes Circus.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

in which he reiterated Firth's desire to receive seals. In response, John Ringling sent a telegram to Firth in Macon, noting, "May send you to another show as you suggest and will let you know in a few days."

The seal matter also concerned Al. G. Barnes manager Cronin, who wrote Ringling on November 26, 1929: "Received your wire this morning regarding prices on seals for the Sparks show, and have answered same. We had already been quoted prices by Capt. McGuire, who they claim is the only person with the proper government permit to sell seals. There are others who will catch them for you, but you are liable to a shake [down] if not sanctioned by the authorities. McGuire's prices are \$65.00 each in lots of ten, less than ten he did not state, but understand they have to make a trip out to catch them, so a few would run more money, but probably not much. He promises to send good stock, and requests three to four weeks time between the order and delivery. The express rate from here, that is, Bassett, California to Macon is \$15.28 per hundred pounds, which seems quite high."

"I wrote you fully Sunday explaining that on this show we only had two seals left, and that if carried next year the wagon would have to be replaced, as the one we had is ready to fall apart. Yesterday, however, I learned from Mr. Fowzer, the same gentleman that wanted to buy the sixty foot flat car, that he has twelve trained seals, consisting of two five seal acts, and two extra seals to fill in, in case of sickness or death. These seals have been working for two years now,

and the trainer formerly was on the Sparks show. [Hugh] Fowzer pays him \$35.00 a week. As Fowzer is putting out a couple more whales [shows on railroad cars], he wants to sell the seals. Asked \$1500.00 for them, but I think I could get them for a couple hundred less. Now, the idea that occurred to me was that if you want us to have seal acts next season, we could buy this bunch from Fowzer, then take the two extras and the two that we already have and ship to Sparks. This would give both shows seals that have already been broke and toughened up to troupe. Fowzer seals are right here, in fact one of the five-acts is working in a store museum in L.A. and I am sending a man to look at it on the quiet tonight.

"If this proposition appeals to you as a way to take care of Sparks' needs for seals, and at the same time replenish Barnes' seal acts, let me know and I will see how much I can chisel Fowzer on the price. However, as far as I am personally concerned, I would still prefer to substitute a monkey cage for the seals on this show, as outlined in my Sunday letter to you. In that case, if you want me to order the seals from Capt. McGuire for shipment to Macon, I will be very glad to attend to same."

Hugh Fowzer was the main competitor of the fabled Pacific Whaling Company during the golden age of such shows from 1928 to 1936. Both exhibited a number of specimens that toured North America by rail. Fowzer's show also included seal acts, but when it became clear that dead whales outdrew live seals, all the firm's capital investment went in

that direction. Thus his interest in unloading his underperforming charges on the Al. G. Barnes show. He later toured whales in the Far East, ending up in China where his travels ceased with the onset of World War II.

The whale shows found a number of good employees when the American Circus Corporation was purchased by Ringling. Harold Anfenger, the genius behind the Pacific Whaling Company, later recalled, "we were able to get some of these men. It was just the same as a circus. You had to book and follow up and also had to have good publicity."

Mike Golden, formerly of the Golden Bros. Circus and Al. G. Barnes Circus, was one of the men who transitioned from circuses to the whale shows. One report noted that he was "credited with addressing a veteran whaling group on the East Coast and actually drawing applause for an interesting and educational talk."²

Manager Cronin successfully chiseled down Hugh Fowzer on the price, as he reported in his December 10, 1929 letter to John Ringling: "I wired you about the twelve seals I had bought for \$1200.00 and have to advise that they are to be turned over to us by Saturday of this week. Am building a tank for them here on the grounds and figure that the tank and training stage will cost around seventy-five or one hundred dollars to build.

"Have also engaged trainer Joe Belovockey who has had charge of them, for \$25.00 per week in quarters and \$35.00 per week on road.

An undated Barnes performing seal.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



"Might be able to cut the cost down a bit by getting a few days picture work, as I already have prospects of using them." Providing animals for movies was a lucrative sideline for the circus. "Will have seals broke into two acts of five each, which will leave two extra, and with the two that I already have here will frame another act of four as others are trained."

Cronin's idea of training two seal acts appears to have been realized according to the 1930 program's description of animal acts presented under the Al. G. Barnes big top as Display No. 21. The act in Ring #2 was described as "juggling and musical playing seals offered by Joe Belovockey," while in Ring #1 trainer C. Shetler presented seals that "juggle many objects" "with the skill of humans."

Out in Los Angeles, Buster Cronin dealt with a variety of entertainers, clowns, midgets, and show girls. He wrote to Pat Valdo on December 27, 1929: "Replying your regarding clowns, up to date I have hired but one clown, Gilbert Haddock, one of the midgets at \$17.50. The other midget asked \$20 so told him to see me later. Told the rest of clowns to get in touch with me after January 1st. They all seem to have the idea we are going to pay Ringling Bros. salaries but I told them there would be no increase in salaries. Most of my people live within 100 miles of Los Angeles and have no other place to go except east and fare too high to make that trip and if our old contracts used this year they are transferable to any of the shows.

"After my conversation with you I let the clowns ride as figured you would help me line up that dept. also arrange clown numbers and props for me. I know my clown numbers were rotten and short of clowns. What do you think of [Charles] Post for head clown? They say he has a lot of props and one thing he attended to business and stayed sober. To me he looks like the best bet out here. How many clowns would you suggest to have?

"I hired most of my girls except three (old) crow looking ones I did not want. Hired [Mark] Smith and wife bareback riders. Klinkart Midgets, Leturena and wife, Raymond Behee, Funny Ford driver and rings. [Charles E.] Redrick band leader. [John T.] Backman equestrian director. Fred Nelson clown and bareback rider. Last four years with King Bros. as equestrian director (Can use him as asst. to Backman). Berney Griggs wanted too much salary but will be around soon when his money gives out. I know him.

"Will appreciate any help you can give me to get a good line up of clowns

and numbers. But cannot give any fancy salaries as this show's drawing power in the west has a limit and to turn in a good profit nut must be kept down. We are having wonderful weather out here and everything going along fine in winter quarters."

Cronin also wrote John Ringling on December 27, 1929 about other personnel: "Sent \$90.00 worth of Santa Fe mileage [script used to pay for railroad travel] last night to John Smith (horse trainer) at Kansas City as per your wire. That was all the mileage I had left, as I had already sent \$75.00 worth to Mr. Meighan to send Walter McLain out here. I engaged him as elephant superintendent. He is going to Chicago from New York and picking up mileage there. McLain was with Sparks last season and will make me a very good man. On the arrival of Smith I will be all set in regards to animal trainers and horsemen, and will begin training Monday.

"I now have 14 seals here in quarters. Am training two 5 seal acts and will make a 4 seal act out of the balance later.

"Stick Davenport who owns one of the rosin back horse acts, wants \$100.00 a week for the use of his stock as last year, which will make \$3,500.00 a year to him. He only works as ringmaster himself, and is so deaf that he is liable to get hurt and we will have the nut. If I had three horses, could handle act ourselves and save the biggest part of the \$3,500.00 we will pay him. All the other stock with the show is owned by us.

"Re-engaged Backman today at the same salary as last year. \$75.00 on road and \$40.00 in winter quarters. Will use his wife taking tickets if she travels, instead of working as last year. She worked bird act last season. Everything going along nicely here."

John T. Backman reviewed his career in a letter to John Ringling on October 3, 1928 after meeting him when he visited the Barnes show: "I have been Equestrian Director with the Al. G. Barnes Circus for past five years. I design and make all wardrobe with the show used in our Tournament and 'Spec.' When I came here there was nothing but animals and clowns. I have made all the other acts which you saw there. I trained and purchased the ostriches, and did a great deal to make it as it is today. I know you have an Equestrian Director and I do not seek his job. However, if you have any opening where you could place me, I would consider changing.

"I have had long experience in show business and for



Redrick's Band, seen here in 1929, also performed for the 1930 show.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

eleven years was owner of Backman's Wild Animal shows and the Backman & Tinch two car circus. We are closing soon and unless I arrange soon I will continue with Mr. Barnes for 1929. I am not dissatisfied here but any place with a larger institution would be pleasing and where I could display talent which one cannot do here on account of limited outlay. If there is no opening, I thank you just the same. In confidence, Sincerely yours, John T. Backman. Home address 7754 Marco Place, Venice, California."³

On December 31, 1929 Cronin wrote John Ringling with a list of the arena acts he was planning for the upcoming season: "Enclosed list of arena acts I have started trainers working on. They will no doubt be changed around some but enough there to keep arena working till ménage number. The right time to take arena down is during swinging ladders but would cut a couple of those acts. What is your suggestion? Figured to take out three sections, less than last season. A lot of small acts can be worked on end stages and throughout the show.

"The first spec, the horse walk around could be kept (makes the show look big) with making new wardrobe for two or three sections. Could change the numbers between specs and use a NEW spec with new music for second spec. If you have nothing special in mind for us could get the man who wrote the last two Barnes specs and music to write it for us cheap and with our old equestrian director and band leader, (hired both of them), they could put it over as worked together with the others. Our wardrobe is in fair shape from last season. Or we could trade our second spec with Hagenbeck-Wallace.

"Am afraid we will have a little trouble switching the midgets to other show as they like Barnes Circus and Cali



Klinkhart's midgets and giant.

The Ringling, MacDougall Collection

fornia and besides are not getting along so well together. The manager has been neglecting them lately they claim. Four of them wanted to go back to Germany when we closed but I talked them into staying. But of course what you want done regarding them will do. Everything going along fine here is quarters....

"If I had a good feature act, something different, could run along in middle of show and would help strengthen performance. This show's reputation has been built around a lot a small acts etc. plenty of them and worked fast. The end rings we had on stages should be full all the time with something."

Cronin suggested the following arena acts for the 1930 season: six male lion act with John Hellott on a horse; riding lion on horse; riding four (bear, leopard, monkey, dog); tiger on elephant; fifteen tiger act by Mabel Stark; wrestling tiger; twelve female lion act by John Hellott; three riding lions on horse; aerial lion; and riding bear on zebra.

He then listed the other animal acts: two elephant acts, two seal acts, two camel acts, high diving monkeys and dogs, monkey slide for life, cockatoos, macaws, two pony acts, two leaping dog acts, one dog act and one monkey act "switch end stages," boxing kangaroos, ostriches, good night ponies, and pigeon song.

Cronin again wrote Ringling on January 7, 1930: "Everything is going along fine in winter quarters. The cook-house checked up for December at a cost of 17.6 cents per meal, and feeding them plenty. Have been buying meat and vegetables from Chinese market in Los Angeles and hauling it ourselves, get 25% better prices this way.

"Hardwood prices are way up. Base price for iron is \$3.40 per hundred pounds. Hardware accessories are standard prices. Have been buying most of shop material, both hardwood and iron goods, from the L. A. Heavy Hardware Co. They have the best hardwoods for our purpose in the

city, have agreed to meet anyone else's price—which they have already done in a couple of instances. On one order they allowed us rebate of \$92.38 after bill had been paid when I had a lower quotation from another firm. In addition they are the only ones that will deliver less than four tons free to the quarters, which means quite a savings.

"Have started the training in both horse and animal departments. The seal man that you sent on from Macon [Sparks Circus] is apparently better than the man that came with the twelve seals I bought out here, and I engaged him at the same salary, namely \$25.00 in quarters and \$35.00 on road. Have started him breaking two five-acts, and

am letting the other man go. Have re-engaged the following bosses that were with us last season: Canvas, Boss Hostler, Ring Stock, Trainmaster, Props, Head Cage Man, Steward, Equestrian Director, Treasurer and Assistant Treas. Have a new boss elephant man started to work this week. Also same Candy Stand man (Levy).

"About all I need is a side show manager and a good Supt. of Inside Tickets. Have told Stick Davenport that I could not use his act or horses, and Mark Smith will break in a new comedy riding act. Need a couple of horses for same. They say there is a pair of rosinbacks available at Peru, likewise some extra ponies there which I could use to advantage.

"Our train is OK as it is, except will have to put new roofing on three of the stock cars, a little new decking and the usual minor repairs...."

Cronin wrote Pat Valdo about clowns on January 13, 1930: "Regarding clowns with this show, and have been delaying to answer same until after I had seen Charley Post. I sent word for him to come out, but I have not seen him yet. He did come out, but I happened to be away at the time. As soon as I see him, I will sign him up for the coming season as producing clown, and will take up the points mentioned in your letter with him.

"I do not intend to use Slivers Johnson—even if I could not get Post as producer. I have some reasons that I would not want Slivers, so if you can place him to advantage on one of the other shows, go right ahead. Bernie Griggs is out here, but he has not signed up yet, as we are at odds over some conditions he wants in his contract. However, I am sure he will eventually come to terms. All the others you mentioned are right in Los Angeles, and can get them any time. Curley Phillips is also here, but he was signed with us last spring and cancelled before we opened. He is no doubt a good enough clown, but seems to be somewhat of a Bolshevik. However, he may decide to reform, in which case I

would be glad to have him.

"We are going to build a Funny Ford car here ourselves. Have a man [Tom Plank] that worked for Cook on the inside of the car last year at the start (has left by the time you visited), who knows how to build one.

"Also note what you have to say regarding the ménage number with this show. Mr. Ringling sent us John Smith from the Sells Floto show to work over our horses this winter. He is considered the best in his line on the Corporation shows, so no doubt we will have that number in better shape than it was last season....

"P.S. Jan. 14th. Since writing the above, Post came out last night and I contracted him for the season as producing clown. Wish that you would write him at your convenience with the advice, etc.

as suggested in your letter, which I am sure would be most helpful to him and of benefit to the clowning with the show this season. His address is: Chas. E. Post, 7656 Parmelee Ave., Los Angeles, Cal."

He also sent Valdo a list of clowns from the 1929 Barnes show who lived in California: Dutch Marco, San Francisco; John 'Bozo' Pizzo (dwarf), Fay Wolcott, Bill Teaffe, Danny McAvoy, Johnny Trigger, and Jack LaCosta, all Los Angeles; Gilbert Haddock (small dwarf), Cucamonga; Ray Harris, Pasadena; and Milt Taylor in Wilmington.

On January 19, 1930 Cronin sent a telegram and a letter to John Ringling: "As I wired you today, I decided to postpone my trip East, as I partly wanted to go over some things pertaining to the show with you. There is so much here to be attended to, that if I left things might not go right.

"Regarding the Barnes spectacle for this year—if we are to have some fresh territory, and part of the Coast towns are new towns for us, by adding new faces and more girls, likewise replacing some of the old Chinese wardrobe with new, I don't know but what this same spec we have been using would give satisfaction again. You mentioned once that you had considerable Mandarin costumes, etc. that were not being used. If these are suitable for us, we could use same.

"I figure it will take about \$1,500.00 to repair our train, including the painting. If you wish the sleepers painted the same color as the Ringling show, advise me, otherwise will paint them over one coat same as they have been (orange).

"Understand there is a complete set of animal props in Peru, belonging to Sells Floto, but which they will not use.



Printed by Illinois Litho, this image of Mabel Stark was designed by Frank Hoban.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Also some extra harness and a couple of rosinback horses there, all of which we could use. Am writing to Peru in regards to this stuff. We are breaking a couple of new rosinbacks here, but need more for two acts.

"Mable Stark cannot handle the wrestling tiger we have here. At first I thought it was just a case of stalling to get the wrestling tiger that is in Peru that she worked with before, but it seems like it's not, this one here just works different, that's all. Personally, I do not think so much of a wrestling tiger being worked after a big tiger act anyhow, as in the mind of most of the public such an exhibition minimizes the ferocity of the tigers, thus detracting from the thrill given them by the larger, fighting act. I have planned to take the arena down during the swinging ladder number.

"We have built, and now in the paint shop, the following new wagons: Dressing Room Canvas; Stake & Chain; Rigging; Stable and blacksmith; and Props. We are now building two new jack wagons, big top canvas wagon, and a combination one for props and inside lights, all of these which will be finished in the next ten days. For all these we only had to order wheels for the two jack wagons, which I have ordered from St. Marys [Wheel Company]. Last year many of our wagons did not have any brakes on them, and we are adding same where needed.

"When Peru shipped us the new seats last August to Colorado Springs, they sent seven sections of grandstand. The old grandstand had eight sections, and as along the Coast particularly the grand stand gets a large percentage of

the admissions. I am building another section now. In order to carry it, I am taking down one of the old plank wagons and building a new one to take the place of it. The extra reserve seat business we will get in ten days on the Coast will pay for it.

"There seems to be practically no picture work in our line this winter. The changeover to talkies has knocked out animal pictures for the time being, but they will no doubt have them again when the new ideas are better perfected. Have booked a three elephant act and a four pony drill at the Shrine Circus in Los Angeles, to be held indoors for nine days in February. Getting \$900.00 for both acts, FOB winter quarters.

"It rained here steadily the first 12 days in January, which handicapped us considerable, especially with the training, as the tents they are working under leaked badly. We do not have the facilities here for accomplishing much in a driving rain. But it has cleared up now, and may not rain to interfere with us any more this season. Will do our best to have everything in first class shape by the time opening day arrives, and trust that what we have done on the equipment this winter will be to your liking."

Cronin's second letter to Ringling on January 19, 1930 noted more on the seals: "The Sarasota office had already wired me a week ago the instructions regarding the seals, and I have proceeded accordingly regards the framing of the seal acts. Expect delivery of the five new seals we had to order to round out the acts the first of this week."

"A list of the Big Show performers engaged to January 23, 1930: Raymond Behee, trapeze, Aerial Rings, (Funny Ford inside); Buddy Bullock (Lady), Ménage Rider and Tandem act; J. E. Casteel, Pony and Dog Trainer and worker; Lorraine Casteel, Ladder, Ménage, Domestic Animal Acts; Patsy Clancy (Lady), Ménage, elephants, Wild West; Dorine Collins, In Comedy Riding act, Ménage, Traps, Elephants; Gilbert Haddock, Midget Clown; Miss Rhea Jack, In Riding Act, Ménage, Ladder, Roman races; Klinkhart Troupe of 13 European Midgets, doing two comedy riding acts using big horses with mechanics, wire act, Wooden Soldier drill and trained rooster numbers; Joey LaForm & Sister, Adagio Acrobatics, Aerialists; Albert Lee, Principal Male Singer; Laura Lee, Ménage, Ladder, Dancer in Spec.; Blossom Link, Principal Lady Singer (Prima Donna); Babe Letourneau, Single Traps, Cloud Swing, and Feature Heel Swing; Vernis Long (Lady), Ladder, Ménage, Wild West, Roman Races; Fred Nelson, Asst. Equestrian Director, Riding Act, Domestic animals; Mark Smith & Stella Smith, Principal Lady and Comedy in big comedy riding act, both Ménage and gaited horse riders, Stella Ladders, Mark Liberty Horse act; Mable Stark, "The Tiger Woman" (You know the rest); George Vierra, Aerialist (Traps, Rings, Contortion); Virginia Wintel, Ladder, Ménage, Traps; Marie Yvonne, Ladder, Ménage, Traps.

"The following not yet signed, but almost sure to be with it, are now here in quarters: Capt. John Smith, Horse Trainer Extraordinary; Capt. John Hellott, Lion Trainer; Capt. Johnny Meyers, Wild Animal trainer; Joe Metcalfe, Elephant Trainer; John Backman, Equestrian Director; Anna Velde, Riding Act, Ladder, Ménage; Frank Chicarello, Concert Actor, does knife throwing, whip cracking and challenge wrestler; Bernie Griggs, Comedian in Riding Act and Funny Ford; Peggy Marshall, Elephant Act, Aerialist, Menage, High Jumps; Bill Hundley, English Clown; Doc Cunningham, Big Show Announcer; Prof. Charles E. Redrick, Band leader.

"The Show's Main Acts as follows: Big Tiger Act (Stark); Male Lion Act (Hellott); Female Lions (Meyers); Riding Tiger on Elephant; Riding Lion on horse; Aerial Lion; Riding Four (Leopard, Bear, Dog and Monkey on Zebras); Wrestling Tiger (Stark); 2 Seal Acts; 2 twelve horse Liberty Acts; 2 Camel Acts; trained yaks, zebras, and American bison working together; 2 acts of four elephants each; and 2 acts of three elephants each with three dancing girls working same; leaping gray hounds, pony drills, riding dogs, troupe of 12 trained zebras, racing camels, racing ostriches, boxing kangaroos, trained cockatoos and macaws.

"Executive Staff: General Manager, S. L. Cronin; General Agent & Traffic Manager, J. B. Austin; Treasurer, Theo. Forstall; Secretary, Jack Youden; Equestrian Director, John T. Backman; Musical Director, C. E. Redick; Special Representative, M. E. Golden."

Clowns, specs and seals were the subject of Cronin's letter to Valdo on January 25, 1930: "[Charles] Post will go into clown number with you as soon as he hears from you. Was talking to him yesterday, we have en-engaged part of last year's clowns and looks like have most all of them soon. Hiring a few more and figure to have around 20 or 22 with the ones we make. Have Tom Plank making me a Funny Ford. He made the one or rather helped make one we had last year. It will cost me around \$300 complete which will include \$100 I am giving him to make it for me. Now if any of the other shows are not able to MAKE the Ford there I can get Plank to make it for them if wanted, in fact could be hired to run it for either show. (I have a man here who can run mine okey [sic] and did after Plank left last year.) And could send Plank on there to make for show as he wants to troop. Using him here am afraid would have trouble with him as disliked here by most all of clowns and [Fred] Beckman. Was the only one I had much trouble with last season....

"Wish you would go over Mr. Ringling's idea of spec with him when talking to him and wire me his idea. I can leave the first spec (horse back) go as it is, change the walk arounds some, and change the second spec into say a Spanish singing spec that ought to take good with Spanish wardrobe, but will cost around \$3500 for wardrobe etc. or if going



Aerialist Babe Letourneau was among the 1930 performers.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

into new territory we could use the above idea for the same spec with very little new wardrobe. Have a good outline for above idea for second spec and can get it ready in a month. He talked of having several specks [sic] he would choose form if new one when on here and I do not like to go ahead and change without his okay. Wire me after you talk spec over with him."

For the 1929 season the Al. G. Barnes mounted spec included a number of international sections. A listing of the entre participants noted "nine men in Mexican costumes, with lead horses and costumed bull fighter. Then eight men in costumes with red velvet and gold trimming, green hat and blanket of gold with green and red trimmings. The Mexican flag was to lead this designated section of the entre."

Cronin penciled in a note to Valdo on this sheet noting "If changed to Spanish spec could use the second entrée [Chinese] as it is last. Change Chinese wardrobe to Spanish. Singing part to follow walk around as at present."

The proposed 1930 spectacle changes by Cronin were detailed in a memo to Valdo.

"Take Spanish section out of first tournament, and use horses and men elsewhere, to follow. Enter at end of Tournament, carriage drawn by six horses, Spanish Governor & wife in carriage, four or six men, courtiers, to escort the Governor's carriage. They make one round, or two rounds of

track at the band stand. The governor and wife alight from carriage and take their places on band stand, where two gold chairs are provided. The Courtiers and midgets in Spanish costumes are also on band platform, which has a curtain to draw each way.

"The Tournament proceeds out back door. The side show band in place. The curtains part and show the stage (Band Platform). The midgets proceed to perform in arena while side show band plays the Tango and midgets dance long enough to allow the customary change from one tournament to another.

"Enter Spanish parade: Spanish Flag Bearer on Blanketed Horse; six Matadors; six Spanish Maidens; four Picadores; more women and what you have; then follow elephants and camels, all lead stock and anything we can fill in with. All take their places in the rings, with side show hula girls and boys in arena. Fandango dance in the three rings; Spanish Duet; Habina Dance; Baritone Song; Spanish Pettello Dance and Final Picture on Stage. Draw curtain on Finale, or carriage could come in and take out Governor. Have plenty tambourines, castinets and finger cymbals.

"I now have 19 seals here now and 3 more ordered but not delivered. One of ones from Sparks is blind and in bad shape. Breaking six acts of three each with an extra one for each two acts per Mr. Ringling's orders. Also making the props for seals for all three shows and will be sent on with seals and cost of seals, props, help, etc. proratioed [prorated] between the three shows for everything. Will try and have all six acts in good shape but time short and trainers scare for seals. Have two trainers and three assts. breaking in on acts. Advertised for trainer in *Billboard* and may dig up another one.

"We had twelve days of rainy weather here and held us back on our work, but now things going along fast and will have a fine equipped show when we open. Cutting out excess props etc. so can move faster etc."

Many performers expected a salary increase since they were now part of the Ringling organization. Cronin wrote Valdo on January 28, 1930 about the problem: "I hired a five people experienced troupe of Hawaiians, three girls and two men, for \$100.00, already out here. But this letter is similar to many we get from performers, and shows the impression lots of acts have regarding salaries now that the shows have changed ownership. However, we are paying the same salaries as last season, except, of course, that some of the old girls who come back are getting raises corresponding to their increased ability, but only small advances."

Pat Valdo wrote Cronin on January 29, 1930 that his help would be in the form of advice from now on. "I should have explained myself more clearly regarding the seal trainers. What I want to have is a man to work each act. Have written Charles Post regarding the clowning and will keep at this and am hoping to improve it somewhat. I will not have time to build anything personally, as I am kept quite



Performer in Spanish spec wardrobe, circa 1930.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

busy here, but no doubt can get some results through correspondence."

"A list of clowns on the Al. G. Barnes Show: Slivers Johnson, salary \$50 (good clown but lazy, Mr. Cronin's comment). Furnishes following: Bride number, Giraffe, Long Show Dance, Long Shirt, General Clowning; Charles E. Post, salary \$40 (very good clown, Valdo's comment), Bugle, Opening Spec., Negro woman walk-around (very bad prop), Convict and rock walk-around, Rubberneck walk-around, big head walk-around, produces clownband. Bernie Griggs, salary \$40. Comedy riding act, works Funny Ford, Plays Devil in Spec; Sailor. Andy Winkler, salary \$10. Revolving Ladder, Prison Gag, Boxing Kangaroo, goes in Elephant foot balls, watches horses, Clown Band, Clown Wedding. John Trigger, salary \$14. Works in Giraffe, Clown Band, Clown Bride, Rides Ostrich, works with Boxing Kangaroo, does trampoline act, works with knife thrower in concert. Milt Taylor, salary \$35. Goose Barrel, Policeman in Funny Ford, takes care of heads, Mrs. Taylor rides ménage and works Aerial Lion. Ray Harris, salary \$37.50. Does high stilts and other stilt numbers, pick up mule. Dan McAcoy, salary \$25. Fill in Clown, Owns Rabbit Dog jointly with Marco. Dutch Marco, salary \$25. Works High Diving Monkey, Singing Mule, Whistles, Rabbit Dog, Big Head. John Pizzo, salary

\$22.50. Midget Clown, General Clowning. Bill Tafe, salary \$25. Works Giraffe, Whistles, Butterfly, General Clowning. Fay Wolcott, salary \$25. Revolving Ladder Act, rides ostrich, Clown Band. Gilbert Haddock, salary \$15. Midget Clown, Big Chain & Dog, General Clowning."

The side show also needed attention. On January 30, 1930 Cronin sent John Ringling a telegram, which noted: "Have engaged Henry Emgard manager our side show. Hoffman expected salary all winter and did not appear much interested in reengagement he has gone east with whale show. Not personally acquainted with Austin King but from what we hear does not have much ability."

A follow up letter was sent January 31, 1930 by Cronin to John Ringling relative to his last telegram regarding side show managers.

"Last January Mr. Hoffman was sent out here from Peru by Mr. Mugivan who allowed him salary of \$50 a week in winter quarters and \$100 a week on road with 25% of sword box. Hoffman was on the nut to Mugivan over \$600 and more before we opened. He did nothing but get sideshow ready for road. He said he did not want to troupe this year at close and later told my treasurer would only come back if winter salary same as last winter. This was out of the question. In the meantime he made a connection with whale people and was put on the pay roll and left here middle of January with whale show getting \$100 a week and a percentage of receipts.

"When I saw Hoffman was not coming back I engaged the man that seemed the best one available, out here on the coast. Henry Emgard who had Christy side show the last five years and Barnes 1925. His salary \$75 a week. I have also engaged a man named Windecker to handle the inside, punch and magic. This man was manager of Cole Bros. last year and a good man and could take management if necessary. I have also engaged as big show announcer and to handle concert a Doc Cunningham, who had the side show here for two years. So I think I am well protected if Emgard falls down. I feel he is more capable of putting the side show together, also has the reputation of being on the lot early and late. If not satisfactory after opening will or course change. I have instructed Emgard to get many girl acts as possible, thus giving me girls for the big show speck [sic].

"Austin King is supposed to be taking a seal act to Australia I have been told. Have not heard from him.

"I think if could get some special curiosity for the side show it would boost the receipts, but for a straight side show, we can get just so much out here and no more. The last four years receipts show that. If my sideshow plans do not meet with your approval, will change them any way you suggest."

John Ringling only had one suggestion for the sideshow, as Pat Valdo spelled out in a January 31, 1930 letter to Cronin. "Mr. Ringling has asked me to inform you that all the side shows next season will carry a broom illusion. This

apparatus will be furnished from Sarasota and will necessitate having one young lady to work same."

This letter was received in California on February 4, 1930 and prompted a response from Cronin.

"Just received in the afternoon mail today your letter of the 31st January relative to the broom illusion for the side show, and will arrange accordingly. Is it desired to use a banner for this act? If so, kindly give us an outline of what it is to be so we can order the banner from Driver Bros. as they are working on our other banners and would want to have this one uniform with the rest of our front."

For the next month Manager Cronin was actively trying to settle out questions regarding winter quarters, horses, hay, staff, seal acts, clowns, and the new broom illusion on the sideshow. He reported on February 2, 1930 to John Ringling about the winter quarters activities.

"As I mentioned to you once before, Stick Davenport has had a couple of strokes since the show closed, and is in bad physical condition. I wrote to his brother Orrin and told him about it, likewise that the doctor here had advised Stick to leave and return East. Now Stick has received a letter from Orrin telling him to sell out and come home to Chicago, so I possibly may be able to get some of his rosin backs at a fair price. Am to see him this afternoon sometime and go into the matter with him.

"Yesterday I bought two very good horses for ring-stock from a riding academy that is about to go broke. One is a high jumper, and the other will make a fine high school horse. Paid \$300.00 for the two, and they have a half dozen more to sell cheap, but I did not feel that I should spend too much on horses at this time. We now have only 72 head of baggage stock. But it is practically impossible to secure suitable horses of this kind in Southern California. I am on the lookout for four or six here and then figured to get some more when we get north into Washington and Montana, where they are more plentiful.

"Owing to the high price of hay out here this winter (due to the long drought) I have never been able to stock up far ahead, and have been just getting enough to run me, as I was fortunate to make a contract with a dealer for hay

at \$24.00 per ton, which he held to in spite of the market advancing beyond that, but naturally he did not want to buy ahead any on a high market. Hay is averaging us \$75.00 per day. Now that it has rained, the situation has eased up, and had a chance this week to stock up with about three weeks supply, so had him put it in. Will cost about \$1600.00, have not seen the exact bill yet. This is the first class good oat hay. This is the first time we have been able to get a little hay ahead this winter. Might state, incidentally, that all the stock is in very fine shape at this time.

"The trainmaster is now working on the baggage section flat cars, and when finished will have them in A No. 1 shape. He has finished the roofing of the three stock cars.

"It begins to look like I overplayed myself a little in the wagon shop expense, but I am sure that when you see the equipment we have turned out, and understand our need for same, that you will be satisfied with the explanation. I do not propose to buy much more material



Miss Laura Lee and clown Bernie Griggs from the 1930 program.
The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

for this department for the balance of the winter, as all the heavy work is now finished or in process.

"The weather out here has been very fine the past week or so, which helps us considerably with the daily work in our 'outdoor' quarters."

On February 4, 1930, Manager S. Cronin wrote to Pat Valdo.

"Acknowledging your letter of the 29th January relative to seal trainers. I had one trainer here, named Joe Belvokey, who came with the 12 seals we bought in December. Also had the boy who worked the three seals for us in the latter part of last season. Then Firth arrived with the seals from Sparks, and have since dug up two more assistants, one of whom Fifth [Firth] thinks would be capable of handling acts if we are not able to get anybody better."

"I am planning on sending Firth with two A #1 acts to the Sells Floto show when the time comes, keep Belvokey with my show, with what should be fairly good acts, also want to keep the man that we had last year, as he is useful in other ways in the menagerie, and would send the new man to the Hagenbeck show, and will have to get a man to help him also. The last three seals we secured only reached us a

few days ago, so I am afraid the acts for Hagenbeck show will not be in such good shape at the start of the season, as it takes a little time to break seals. However, both Firth and Belvokey are working hard on all the seals daily. This, of course, is subject to Mr. Ringling's approval. I figured he would want Sells Floto to have the best acts, and Firth is probably the best man, but Belvokey is a Coast man and I can get along with him all right. The way it stands now we need one more man, either an assistant, or a trainer if he is better than the third one mentioned above.

"As you may have noted by the lists sent you and Mr. Ringling, I have hired several new clowns, all of whom are supposed to be good men, and I now want to pick up some fill-in or Sears Roebuck clowns to bring the number up to about 22 or 24 clowns in the show. Post is building the props, etc. you wrote him about, and will be glad to follow any suggestions you wish to make, as I have impressed on him that our clown numbers must be first class this year.

"I know that Mr. Ringling is a very busy man, and has no time to be bothered with many small details, and less time to write me. I wish that you would keep me advised of any suggestions he might make regarding the performance. Also please let me know as soon as you can the details of the new spectacle figured out for us, what wardrobe we will have to make for same, and what will be sent us, if any."

In response to the request about the shows spectacle, John Ringling telegraphed Cronin requesting photos of existing spec wardrobe so the designer could see what was on hand.

"Put one of the Mexican costumes on somebody and also one of the Neapolitan and send us snap shot photograph of them. The first unit of the Spec will be called Persia requiring Oriental costumes and second one the Pageant of Pekin using Chinese costumes. Perhaps you can rebuild the Mexican and Neapolitan costumes to make them oriental type using new turbans or fezzes...May be able to send you seal man...May be able to work Plank with Wallace show."

One of the letters that Cronin sent to John Ringling was a list of people, name, acts and salary that were contracted up to February 2nd, 1930.

"BIG SHOW Performers, (All go in spectacle & general useful); John T. Backman, Equestrian Director, \$75.00; Joe Belovecky, Seal Trainer, \$35.00; Buddy Bullock, Ménage, Tandem act, etc. \$20.00; Jack Casteel & Wife, Dog & Pony trainer, ladder, Ménage, dogs, etc. \$65.00; Patsy Clancy (Miss), Elephants, Ménage, Ladder, Wild West, etc. \$27.50; Dorine Collins, Traps, Riding act, Menage, \$20.00; Helen Culley, Ladder, Ménage, etc. \$17.50; E. F. Firth, Seal Trainer (This man goes to other shows) \$35.00; Rhea Jack, Riding Act, Ladder, Ménage, Roman Races, etc. \$25.00; Klinkhart Troupe, 12 midgets, Wire Act, Comedy Riding, Drill, \$325.00; Joe LaForm Duo, Adagio Acrobatics, Ladder, Ménage, etc. \$40.00; Al & Laura Lee, A1 Male Singer

(King), Wife, Ladder, Dancer, \$50.00; Babe Letourneau, Traps, Cloud & Heels Swings, \$40.00; Blossom Robinson, Prima Donna, \$35.00; Vernis Long, Ladder, Ménage, Roman Races, Wild West , \$25.00; Fred Nelson, Asst. Equestrian Director, Riding Act, etc. \$40.00; Mark Smith & Wife, Comedy Riding Act, Ménage, Riders, \$90.00; Mabel Stark, Tigers, etc. \$50.00; George Viera, Aerialist, \$25.00; Virginia Wintel, Ladder, Ménage, Traps, \$20.00; Marie Yvonne, Ladder, Ménage, Traps, \$20.00; Mrs. Charles Post, Ménage, Tandem, etc. \$25.00; Hazel Moss, Ménage, Ladder, Traps, Wire, \$25.00; Herb Cook & Wife, Riding Acts, Ladder, Ménage, Domestic Animals, \$70.00; Anna Velde, Ménage, Ladder, etc. \$22.50; Charles Post, Producing Clown, \$50.00; Bernie Griggs, Comedian in riding act and Funny Ford act \$50.00; Frank Chicarello, Wrestler, Knife Thrower, Whips, etc. \$?; Henry Emgard, Side Show Manager, \$75.00; A. A. Windecker, Inside Lecturer, Punch, Magic, \$35.00; Marshall, Side Show Band & Minstrels, \$30.00; Fred Shaw Co., Hawaiian Troupe (3 girls, 2 men), \$100.00; Prescott & Old, Mental Mystics, \$40.00; Bertie Youden, Sword Ladder, \$25.00."

Time was getting short and decisions regarding the seal acts and building the Ford clown car needed to be settled, so Cronin sent a telegram to Valdo on February 6, 1930.

"Wrote yesterday fully regarding plans for seals suggest arranger for trainer mentioned your wire for summer season, and after reading my letter you may deem advisable send him here for short time remaining before our opening need good trainer for Hagenbeck seals. [Tom] Plank wants sixty self and wife. I offered fifty, if want him other shows or making Fords would suggest letting me hire him then transfer as would want more of other shows for Ford he made us."

A few days later on February 10, 1930 Valdo still needed answers regarding the seal acts, the statue acts and the broom illusion and advised Cronin of the situation.

"Received your letter regarding the seal situation and think it best to have the trainer go there immediately, provided I can close with him. If I succeed, will have him report to you right away.

"I don't know whether or not Mr. Ringling has ever mentioned to you that you will have a statue number with the show next season. I called Mr. Ringling's attention to the fact that it would be very difficult for the Barnes show girls to make up for statues, as some of the girls went in the performance so many times, but [he told] me that he had instructed you to find extra girls for this purpose. The least number you could get along with for statue act would be about fifteen, using five girls in each pose. Will call his attention again to this matter as soon as he returns, and in the meantime, you can get a line on the girls.

"Regarding the new specs, as soon as he returns will go over the whole thing with him and wire you all information. I think it would be a good idea for you to engage Tom Plank,

as we will need someone to operate funny Ford with Wallace show. They have built three of these cars in Peru.

"Your line up of clowns looks very good and have some more suggestions which I will mail to Charlie Post. Any further information that I have that will be of interest or value to you will mail you from time to time.

"Am having sketch made of broom illusion and will send it to you and you can send it to Driver for the banner. Will also mail you synopsis and lecture and will ship apparatus to you. I think you can use the same girl that you use in the sword box, but am not sure of this, as the girl in the broom illusion uses a harness which has to be strapped to her and don't know if you could do this so many times a day. You can use your own judgment in this matter."

On February 11, 1930 Valdo wrote Cronin stating "Enclosed find sketch of broom illusion which you can forward to Driver for your banner." The Chas. G. Driver Tent Company was a producer of tents, tarpaulins, awnings, wagon covers, show tents, pictorial banners, canvas specialties and anything made of canvas.⁴

John Ringling had an interest in the operation of the side show and Cronin wrote Valdo on February 11, 1930 noting the following.

"When Mr. Ringling visited us last season, one of the very few objections he made was to the sword box in the side show, due to the extra 15 cents charge being made to see how it was done. Candidly, this extra jip was not to my liking either, as it savored too much of the old time cooch blowoff, however it was arranged for over my head, the side show manager getting a percent of same. Now, we still have the sword box outfit in good shape, and I do not see any objection to using same as a platform act as no extra charge, to add one more platform to the side show, but merely as an act, not to explain or let the patron see how it is done. Wish that you would find out from Mr. Ringling if it will be all right to use it in this manner."

Actually John Ringling had a few other comments about the Barnes Circus when he visited the show the previous season. A page of Barnes Show Notes listed a number of concerns:

"Property men are in big top after doors are open, driving arena stakes, adjusting rigging, etc. This was done before the night show and should be done between shows. Stakes are also pulled during the performance which distracts greatly from the performance, for instance while girls are singing in the ménage number, property men were pounding iron stakes to get them up.

"Smith & Denis, (Horse Trainers) lead tournament in dress suits which fit badly and look much out of the picture.

"If midget wire act is retained suggest that they do two acts instead of one. With present arrangement only one or two are on the wire and the rest have to stand on the ground.

Think it would be much better if they were split up in two acts the same as they do the riding.

"Several of the performers work continuously in the same spot.

"Seal act is lost in the arena as ring curb and bars hide the animals.

"Chutes for the tigers entrance ruin ménage act finish. This happened at both performances that I saw.

"Ladies in tournament badly arranged with best looking girls hidden.

"Program badly balanced; trampoline act in liberty horse number, acrobats in elephant act, etc.

"Clowns wardrobe very dirty.

"Pick up mule works only twice and boxing Kangaroo really a run-around.

"Swinging ladders and other various riggings are owned by the show. Mr. Cronin does not approve of this and in his opinion, under California compensation law, the show would be liable in case of accident. He suggests that show sell riggings to the girls who use them.

"The show is started with an announcement which in my opinion does not add to the dignity of the performance."

Manager Cronin had the opportunity to send some advice to Valdo on February 14, 1930: "In the event that you require a good three people wire act on any of the shows, I have had a lot of correspondence with Jack Moore, 1226 Lewellen Ave., Wichita, Kansas who is at liberty. He finally agreed to work for \$140.00 per week (2 women, 1 man), but at the same time I negotiated with the Butters Trio for the same salary, and decided they were better for us because the girls do the other acts we need around this show, whereas Moore's girls double on ladders and loop only."

Cronin had some concerns for his show and sent a telegram to Valdo on February 16, 1930.

"Think [Rex] Rosselli could give us good results if here couple weeks prior to opening. We would also understand fully Mr. Ringling's ideas as to spectacle and performance.⁵ Sixteen clowns now signed others pending that department will be strong have nearly all other people needed signed now except more girls writing fully today regarding carrying out Mr. Ringling's plans."

Cronin had a number of concerns which he expounded upon in a letter to Valdo that he wrote on February 16, 1930.

"Note that you are sending us a seal man, which no doubt will be the best plan, especially for the third set of acts for the Hagenbeck show. We have ordered the musical instruments and made a complete set of props for each of the six acts. We are keeping an account of all expenses pertaining to the seals, and will split the nut accordingly among the shows getting the acts. Have just received bill from the Sparks show for the three seals they sent out, amount

\$525.00. Will mail them check in payment today. One of these three seals is blind and of very little use, so I am going to let Firth take it along to Sells Floto with the others, making eight in all that Sells Floto will get. Not having been instructed otherwise, I am figuring that Mr. Ringling will want Sells Floto to have the best acts and trainer, they being the largest show and playing more cities.

"At this writing I have sixteen pretty good clowns signed up, with a couple more pending, and figure to use all told about 22 to 25 clowns. How does this number seem to you? Most of those engaged have some pretty good numbers, and ideas, and I will see that they give us a run for our money. Have not signed Tom Plank yet, but he is coming to see me tomorrow. He is all set, we have a difference of \$5.00 in salary still standing between us, but will adjust that.

"As for the statue numbers you mention, I feel confident that the Barnes Circus will have better numbers than any other show. I hired last week a woman who has a troupe of six girls who have been presenting a posing act in vaudeville and working at moving picture studios. This woman seems to be a good keen business woman as well as a performer in statue line of years experience, and I know that she will give me results in this line. I will have her get me a few more girls, and we also can no doubt use about five of our own girls without interference with the other acts they do. Having these girls for a statue act also gives us an added number for spectacle, and will make them learn other acts also. In fact the six above referred to are now out daily practicing riding, three of them have had past experience, and the other three are anxious to learn. This troupe has been posing in the nude where allowed, other places using bronze, so you know they are the real goods.

"No other show in America will be able to equal the ménage number we are going to have. We will have 36 or 38 horses in same, besides a couple of jumpers. John Smith has gone over all my ménage horses, and has them in first class shape. Will have two rear-back horses ready, possible three. Have ordered some saddles from Cincinnati as suggested in your wire, also have a line on some out here owned by a riding academy that is about to go broke which perhaps I can get at a bargain."

The ménage routine for the Al. G. Barnes Show consisted of the following: "Enter to positions on track, side passage, Waltz, March, Gallop to ring, Mount ring curb, Stand in Saddle, Song, Cooch with song, Come out of ring back to positions for lay down, Lay down, Girls dance around horse, Stand on horse, Sit up, Stand on Saddle, Girls four steps ahead, Rear, One Knee, Mount, All horses dance in one spot, One Knee, Back in to ring, Solos.

"Please be sure to send me full dope on the new spectacle as soon as you can, so I can arrange to have our end of things properly taken care of. If it would be possible to send [Rex] Rosselli out here a couple of weeks before we open, I

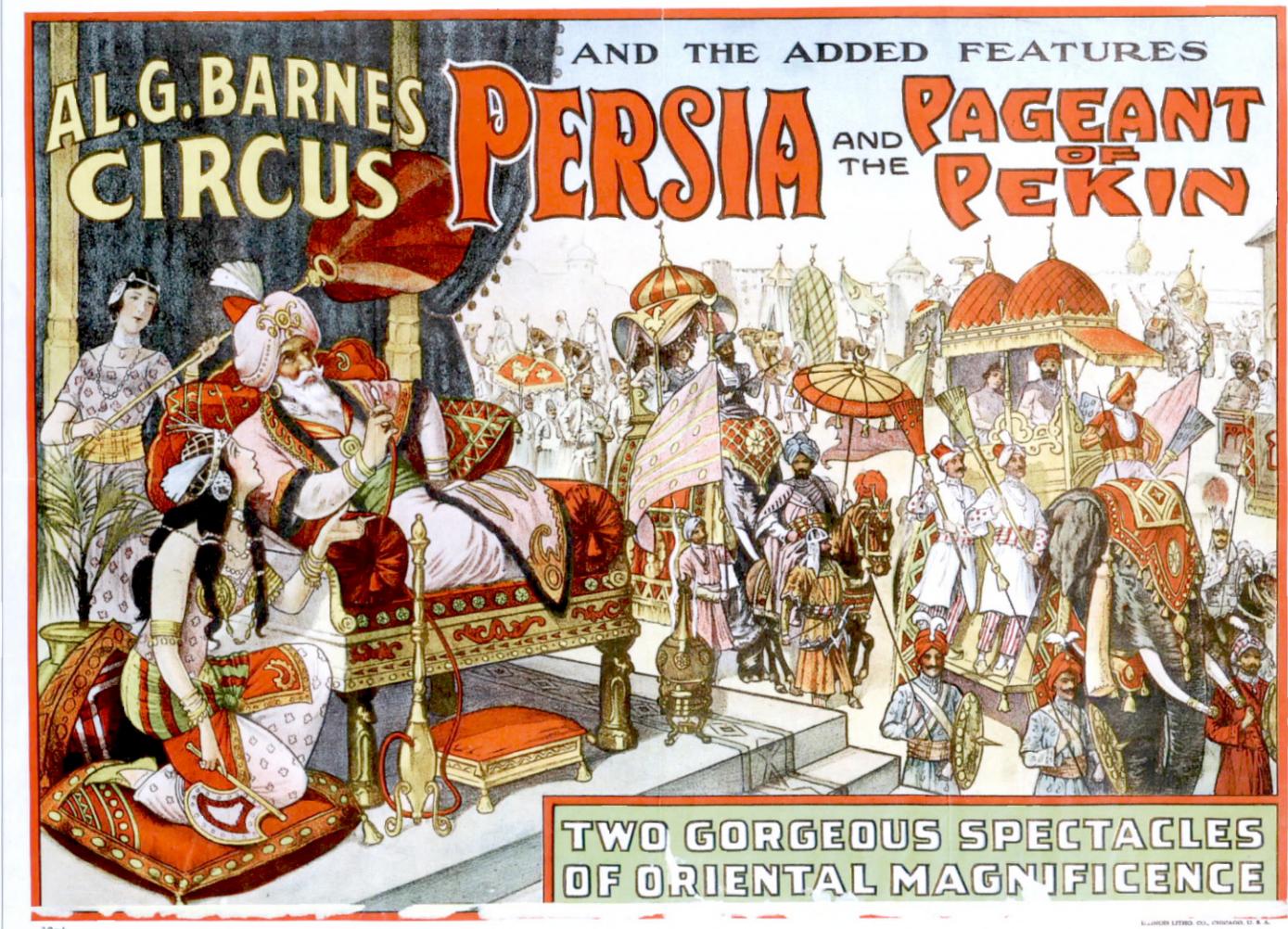
know that he could accomplish more and give us a better spec. than if we attempt to put it on without expert advice, and having been there in Sarasota, he will know exactly what your and Mr. Ringling's ideas are, not only for the spec. but other details of the performance. Would like to have him if it can be arranged.

"We have a Los Angeles company which makes uniforms for the studios and many other organizations out here drawing up some ideas they wish us to look over for uniforms for the ticket sellers, doormen, animal men, ushers, etc. as needed. From my talk with them, I believe that they can give us good work as the Eastern house we formerly dealt with and as good prices. They also have some ideas that are away from the stereotyped style of circus uniforms used for the past many years. California, you know, is way ahead of the East in attractive, flashy uniforming and dressing of all kinds of businesses. I believe this will also meet with Mr. Ringling's approval, as I noticed when he visited us last summer he eyed up the working boys and ticket men critically—and the last year's uniforms, sent us from the East, were nothing to rave over—they answered the purpose, but were not very flashy or dressy looking.

"Now, as to our big show concert, the Wild West idea is a dead issue as a circus concert in this territory. Half the natives in the smaller towns can ride rings around any cowboy we can get. Last year's receipts show that Wild West will not get the money out here. I have in mind something for the concert which will utilize people from the big show performance entirely, thus giving us a concert with hardly any nut, and still a pleasing one. We are figuring to present a very quick all-girl revue along the lines of a minstrel show. This to be built around the troupe of six girls referred to earlier in the letter, and to end with a small posing number. Then the wrestler for the finish. The man I have hired for announcer knows how to frame such a concert, and can handle same and I think make us more money than a wild west with nothing like the nut. Another thing, we have no horses here suitable for Wild West, and most cowboys are useless for any other work in the performance. Of course, this is just my idea as a concert, but I am convinced it will prove a novelty and a money getter. If Mr. Ringling does not approve, or he or you have any other suggestions, wish you would let me know so I can act accordingly. Everything is going along fine, and I am satisfied that we will have the best looking outfit and the best performance ever presented by the Al. G. Barnes Circus."

The idea of sending Rex Rosselli to the Barnes show weighed heavy on Cronin's mind as he telegraphed Valdo on February 26, 1930.

"We open March twenty third rehearsals start eighteen have received no word from you regarding spectacle and what we are to make at this end. Are you sending Rosselli or are we to put on spectacle ourselves. Please advise



Poster for the 1930 spec.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

everything in fine shape aside from spec uncertainty."

On February 28, 1930 the western movie star Tom Mix who was to be on the Sells Floto Show that year sent a letter to John Ringling after making a visit to the Al. G. Barnes winter quarters.

"I went down yesterday and visited the Barnes Winter Quarters and found the following conditions.

"The Winter Quarters are situated on a track of land near Arcadia. There is a make shift stable where the liberty horses and the ring stock are being quartered. The baggage stock are outdoors in an improvised corral. There has been an old tent nearby where they could be taken in case of storm.

"All the painting, rebuilding of wagons, repairing props and seats is being done in old tents, making all of this work difficult as the quarters are in the river bottom and sand and dirt blowing in continuously.

"The machine shop and blacksmith shop are in a make shift shack open on both sides, covered over by pieces of side wall. The cook house is a shack built by odds and ends of corrugated iron, piano boxes and canvas. Props and equip-

ment of all descriptions are piled up wherever convenient.

"The breaking in of the Rosinback horses and the training of the animal acts are being done in another improvised tent.

"Mr. Cronin has got his wagons and equipment in fine shape. That is the wagons are built strong and durable, but owing to the limited amount of equipment he has had to work with they lack finish and polish and under the circumstances I consider he has done more than could be expected.

"The stock is all in good finish but very rough owing to being outdoors. The rolling stock is in good condition.

"The wardrobe department is housed in another shack making it almost impossible for good results to be arrived at both from an economical standpoint and for appearance.

"There is not a building or improvement on this property that is worth anything outside of the railroad tracks.

"Mr. Cronin has broken a good tiger act and it looks as though he is going to have a corking little circus, but it is a crime to house this property under present conditions as the outdoor exposure on all properties deteriorates them tremendously, to say nothing of the waste and expense.

"There is one elephant "Tusco" [Tusko] that has been confined in a cage built of railroad rails. He has been in this cage for seven weeks. I believe that this elephant, if continued to be used, will cost the show a lot of money. From what I can learn he is a bad actor.

"Mr. Cronin really needs one more eight up and one four up to handle this show properly but can get along as is. In my opinion additional equipment would be profitable.

"Two good seal acts, one for the Floto Show and one for the Wallace Show have been broken in and are in good condition. These will be shipped to Peru shortly. I am arranging to bring them in the same car in which I ship my paraphernalia thereby saving the cost of an additional car. I can get a baggage car for 18 1/3 fares which will almost enough men to use up the eighteen fares which will be deductible from their salaries. In this way I can save the organization almost the entire cost of the car."

"I would advise new Winter Quarters where better conditions can be arrived at to quarter this Circus next season as it would be a saving to do so. They pay around three or four thousand dollars this property for the season and it is impossible to realize anything from the gate owing to the isolated location.

"I believe Mr. Cronin to be a hard working, conscientious man and looking after your interests to the best of his ability.

"There is a bucking horse here I intend to ship in the car with the Seals as Mr. Cronin has no use for it and as long as the transportation does not cost anything I will bring him along.

"Mr. Cronin needs an equestrian director."

The report by Tom Mix shows the lack of permanent buildings on the property, difficult working conditions, and an isolated location. This location did not allow for visitors who were willing to pay the price of admission to see the show in winter quarters where a few extra dollars always helped defray expenses.

Valdo telegraphed Cronin: "Mr. Ringling out of town but had already decided not to send flying act but he wants to send high wire act for feature." An undated Western Union telegram arrived from Valdo with details about the necessary items to rig the Gretonas high wire act: "Our poles [R.B.&B.B. tent poles] thirty seven feet long with about seven in butts and five inches wide at top. You also need two wooden dead men six by eight by five feet long with eye bolt in center, eye bolt made of material one and a half inch thick. Also need four eyebolts for top of pole about three quarters thick and also need bands around pole of three inch wide three eighths thick band iron also two jacks that go back of seats inside side wall. Suggest you have poles and material ready and with help of blacksmith Jensen and Portland they can help and show you just what they want. Dead man is outside tent at big top stake line and needs ten

or twelve stakes each side."

The idea plans for the posing acts opened the way for additional female performers to be added to the show. In a March 4, 1930 letter Cronin pitched his idea to John Ringling.

"Your letter of the 28th of February relative to the statue acts received today, and I will try to explain the situation so it will be clearer to you. However, will state at the outset we are arranging everything OK and will be able to put on a very fine statue number.

"Before I ever received instructions from you to put on a statue number, I had engaged a Miss Cherie, with a troupe of six girls, with whom she has been presenting a posing act in vaudeville for some time past, likewise working in various motion pictures. The salary of \$200.00 for the seven people.

"These are the girls that I was figuring to use as the nucleus of my concert, as they also do a singing and dancing revue, but as you advise not to present this type of concert, have called this part off, and they are all learning to ride ménage and do swinging ladders instead.

"This Miss Cherie seems to be a very capable woman, and understands the posing thoroughly as it should be done for proper effect. In fact, I first connected with her at the Shrine Circus in Los Angeles, where the girls were doing posing (in the nude) as a concert feature. Do not intent to go that strong with the circus, of course, but it shows that the girls know their stuff. So I have arranged with Miss Cherie to handle the posing number for us, and to secure more girls for same, which she has done. These last, however, are being signed up at lower salary than the original six.

"For the original troupe this woman has her own wardrobe, and I have already started her to making additional costumes for the others. However, if you are having some sent us from Sarasota, they will no doubt be better for the purpose and we can use them.

"Regarding the method for whitening the bodies for the statues, she says her method consists of first applying a base of heavy thick paste, then Stein's heavy make-up powder, which gives the effect of marble. Instead of wigs she uses a wrap around turban. However, it might be well let your wardrobe come on, and we can use whatever is best, also in the event Miss Cherie blew up [left the show], we would have enough of our own wardrobe available to still put the acts on. From what I can see, this woman knows how to handle the girls, and with her handling the posing number in person, I feel sure it will be well taken care of.

"All the girls this woman has hired have been coming out to quarters daily and practicing riding under John Smith, and he says that out of the bunch he thinks he will get at least ten very fair riders. Their contracts all call for generally useful, and if we decide later on to do so, we can still use them in the concert, that is, the original seven. They

have been together for some time, are all young and good appearing, and in fact the best all around bunch of circus timber I ever saw—think we were lucky to catch this woman at a time when she needed an engagement.

"Glad to hear that you have decided to send us the high wire act [The Gretonas], as think same will be better in every way for us than the flying act. I have instructed Mr. Backman to cut out the men with dress suits leading the tournament. Also to make a new outfit for the girl with the flag."

"Mr. [Rex] Rosselli arrived today, and he explained the idea of the Spectacle to me this afternoon, and it sounds all right. The wardrobe room is starting in the morning to make up what new costumes they can, and will buy the others still required for the new spec."

It was on March 7, 1930 that the baggage car that Tom Mix was shipping to Peru, Indiana was ready to go. Cronin wrote to Valdo regarding the shipment of seals and a final count on his clown alley.

"As I have wired you today, Tom Mix has a baggage car going direct to Peru, supposed to leave here tomorrow, and we are sending in same the seal acts, with props, for both Sells Floto and Hagenbeck shows; likewise four ostriches bought by me for Mr. Adkins.

"Before I let any of the seal trainers that are here start work I signed them up on a contract calling for \$25.00 per week in quarters and \$35.00 per week on the road, all three the same. I had a little trouble getting Firth to sign the contract, as he wants the privilege of selling pictures, etc. in the menagerie. I told him that if was to be with my show no doubt we could arrange on a fifty-fifty basis to do this, but that I positively could not make any arrangements whatever along this line for Sells Floto, that he would have to take it up with Mr. Terrell when he got to Peru. I am sending Firth to Sells Floto, as I figured Mr. Ringling would want then to have the best seal acts. Firth is undeniably a good trainer, but it is hard to keep him down to earth at times,

The Barnes spec under canvas.



The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

as he has an exalted idea of the importance of his acts and services to a show. I will transfer his contract to Sells Floto and Mr. Terrell can make any arrangements he sees fit when the seals get there. The other man, Hebler, while he has not been here long, seems to be a good, conscientious worker and very amiable, and am sending him to Hagenbeck. Am keeping the Hungarian, Joe Belockey, as he has his home out here, and will be better suited to our show. He is a rather uncouth person, but a good hard worker and not afraid to wear overalls and get dirty, although his ring appearance will not equal either of the other two men.

"Am enclosing herewith the list of clowns as it finally stands for the opening. As they are all in the immediate vicinity, they will no doubt all be on hand. There are a few too many on the list, but as explained in my former letter, by the time we get away from Los Angeles will have the number thinned down to twenty as instructed. It looks like I have too many high salaried clowns and not enough fill-ins, but this will all adjust itself after we have the opportunity to look over the field. I will also send the final lists of other performers and side show in a few days.

"The salary list will be a trifle high at the opening, but will have same down to requirements on leaving Los Angeles. If a few do not drop off themselves, as they usually do, will weed out some of the incompetents myself. When can I expect the high wire act to arrive? And what salary are they to receive?

"I know that Mr. Ringling is too busy with the other shows, etc. to be bothered with minor details about this one, so will not bother him with letters, but I wish that any time in talking with you he makes any suggestions or criticism of the way we are handling things, you would let me know, as I have no other way of knowing if he approves and we want to handle everything just as he desires.

"Mr. [Rex] Rosselli is here and we are getting lined up fine for the spec. The curtains, etc. for the posing acts which you shipped from Sarasota arrived this morning, and am sending them to the cleaners today."

There was also an attached list of the clown alley and salary recap:

"Clowns engaged with Al. G. Barnes Circus March 7, 1930: Charles E. Post, producing clown, \$50.00; Arthur Burson, general clowning, \$30.00; Rue Enos, general clowning, \$35.00; Robert Gilbert, fill-in clown, \$17.50; Elmer Goddard, comedy juggler, \$25.00; Gilbert Haddock, midget clown, \$17.50; Ray A. Harris, two stilt numbers, \$45.00; Bones Hartsell, long shoe dance, \$35.00; Jack Klipper, spec. walkarounds, \$40.00; Dutch Marco, general clowning, \$25.00; Dan McAvoy, gen-

eral clowning, \$25.00; Curley Phillips, trick dogs, \$37.50; J. Bozo Pizzo, midget clown, \$22.50; Bob Standing, general clowning, \$25.00; Clyde Stiltz, two stilt numbers, \$35.00; M. Lowande Jr., general clowning, \$25.00; Lawrence Swalley, general clowning, \$30.00; Bill Teaffe, general clowning, \$25.00; Joe White, general clowning, \$25.00; Leslie Jordan, general clowning, \$25.00; Fay Wolcott, revolving ladder, \$27.50; Charles Forest, revolving ladder, \$20.00. Note Bernie Griggs, comedian in riding act & Funny Ford, and Jack McAfee, riding act & revolving ladder comedian not included in above as they do not do general clowning."

The curtains for the posing acts arrived from Sarasota and were being cleaned when additional instructions arrived on March 10, 1930 from Pat Valdo explaining how the girls' make-up was to be handled.

"Replying to your letter regarding the statue number Mr. Ringling is under the impression that you are planning on having all the girls use the white make-up on their entire bodies.

"This would not be practical for the girls who make several numbers in the show as it would be impossible for them to make a quick change with entire body covered with make-up.

"We have used the following method with this show [R.B.&B.B.] for years with very good results. The girls wear white tights, white wigs and girdles similar to the ones we have sent you and use the make-up on the face, neck and hands. This way they can make a change in two or three numbers.

"Mr. Ringling suggests however if the six girls you have engaged for statues will look better in their make-up than the girls wearing white tights. To let them use their own make-up but to be very careful and avoid any suggestiveness or indecency. I am sure you will be able to handle this matter satisfactorily."

A follow up telegram to Cronin came the next day: "Please note correction in letter you will receive that girls wear gloves in statues instead of make-up on hands."

Another change was in the wind as a Cossack Troupe for the show was coming overland from the East. On March 1, 1930 Cronin telegraphed John Ringling that he has "Contracted Cossack Troupe four men one woman last season with [101] Ranch doing most everything in Cossack for one fifty week for concert etc. Coming from St. Louis getting in touch with Cossacks here to protect framing concert as you wish. Figuring twenty clowns woman furnishing statue posing acts had years of experience handling same." However Pat Valdo advised Cronin in a telegram. "Mr. Ringling now likes your original idea for concert with girls, etc. and asks if you can get rid of Cossacks. Have references to outline of concert you sent here with girls, midgets and other people instead of using Wild West."

On March 11, 1930, Cronin sent a telegram to Valdo.

"Cossack troupe on way from St. Louis driving through no way to cancel had to buy five horses for them as they are murder on stock and cannot afford to spoil my ménage horses. Will outline combination Cossack and girl concert and get rid of Cossacks later."

With the Cossack troupe on the way, Mr. Ringling had a few more ideas for the program of the Barnes Show. A letter from Valdo to Cronin on March 12, 1930 outlined additional ideas.

"Just received your letter of March 7 regarding the disposition of the seals and trainers, I have had several wires and letters from Firth which I have not bothered with, and have the same trouble with him on the Sparks show regarding the sale of photographs. He can fight that out with Mr. Terrell.

"Hebler is a very good man whom I have known for several years. He has been with the Ringling show, the Floto show, in fact, all of them.

"The clown list looks very good. There are a few of them I do not know, and after you have been out a week or two, you can see just what you have.

"Regarding the concert, Mr. Ringling now is very sorry that he did not take your first suggestion, with the girls and the other available talent with the show, but realizes that it is too late now to do anything but go ahead with the Cossacks. In the conversation last night, Mr. Ringling mentioned a thing that might be very good and well for you to keep in mind.

"He thinks it would be a wonderful thing if a tiger could be broken to run on top of one of the revolving tables, similar to the way ponies run them. You could have a long shaft on the crank and it could be operated by a man outside the arena. This arrangement, however, will take a little thought and am merely passing this suggestion on to you, to be used some time in the future.

"The high wire act [The Gretonas] will close in Bridgeport, Conn., March 15, and we are trying to get them out of New York the next day, and they should be in Los Angeles around the 19th. The salary is \$300 and it is a marvelous act and one of the features with the Ringling show last season. This act should be a sensational with you as it was with us.

"Any time when I hear Mr. Ringling make any suggestions or criticisms, will surely let you know, as I believe it is best for all of us, but, confidentially, up till now I can assure you that Mr. Ringling has not criticized anything that you have done and am sure that he is more than pleased with the way you have handled things, and I might add, I personally agree with Mr. Ringling.

"Am looking forward to getting out there and visit with you a few days after the Ringling and Floto show openings. Am sure I will enjoy it. Wishing you a very successful opening, which I am sure you will have, and with best wishes."

A report on the show's progress was sent from Cronin to John Ringling on March 12, 1930.

"We bought four more very fine baggage horses last week. This brings the total of baggage stock up to 78, which is the same as started out with last season, and the stock as a whole is in much better shape, as we have weeded out all the culs and disabled horses.

"Our adjuster of last season, Mike Golden, went out with one of the whale shows in January. I had been counting on using him again, but a few days ago he advised me that he had decided to stick with the whale. For newspapers back on the show I had engaged Will R. Hayes, who has had considerable adjusting experience as well as press experience, having been adjuster with both corporation and independent shows in the past. So it is perfectly agreeable to Hayes to switch him to the adjusting, and have secured another man for press. Hayes and [Sam B.] Dill got in bad on the John Robinson's show over gash [a girl of ill repute], and he has not been with a Mugivan and Bowers show since, but he is a capable man and I think I can get service out of

The Gretonas were one of the Barnes show's featured acts in 1930.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



him. I know what is required, and he will have to deliver or we will get somebody else. In a pinch I can handle the adjusting myself temporarily, but as I say think Hayes has had his lesson and will attend to business. The 'Native Son' from here up to Frisco is quite a problem, so I may take on another man to help Hayes that far. I can get a local man here, now connected with the L.A. Sheriff's office, who has had show experience in the past both with this show and Hagenbeck-Wallace. Would only figure to use him until we are safely out of California, as do not want to leave any possible holes open for future shakes, and California is certainly the toughest State we hit out here.

"Aside from the big show performers and band, my pay roll will run about the same as last season, no higher. The performers will start off somewhat higher, as I have previously explained to you, but after Los Angeles I will have the dressing room down to last year's basis, with the exception, of course, of the high wire act you are sending. Owing to being forced to use a union band (to avoid trouble, as they issued an ultimatum to our leader to join or else) it will put the band cost about \$80.00 to \$100.00 per week higher. Our leader will be the same, and two-thirds of his men, as most of them had union cards last year and worked scab regardless. In all there are 16 pieces and the leader.

"I have not gone into great detail regarding small matters with you, as knew you did not want to be bothered with same, but have tried to use my best judgment at all times and figure for the best interests of the show, and anything that is done that is not clear to you, I will be glad to explain either when you come here to visit us, or by letter, and I trust that what I have done will meet with your approval. Everything is going along all right. Rehearsals start next Tuesday, and I do not anticipate anything more serious than the usual last minute flurry to hinder or mar our opening."

After doing a recap of the events for Mr. Ringling, Cronin wrote to Valdo on March 13, 1930. "Regarding the Cossacks, I am sorry that I did not get your letter a day sooner. They left St. Louis Monday, driving through, so it was impossible for me to head them off. However, I will frame a combination concert, using the Cossacks and girls both, and throw in the whipcracker and wrestler (same man) [Frank Chicarello] who is already with us. This will give us a concert cost of only the Cossack salaries. When Mr. Ringling looks us over, if he thinks the girls alone are OK for the concert, we can cancel the Cossacks.

"The woman in charge of the posing acts has lined up 14 nice looking young girls besides herself. They are all trained tap dancers and can give us a good concert number. There is no change in her salary, and she is willing to handle as many girls as we want.

"Everything is going along all right, and do not anticipate any hitches between now and the opening, other than the usual minor difficulties that crop up at the last minute."

Plans to rig the Gretonas high wire act were underway as Cronin wrote to Valdo on March 20, 1930.

"Have been so busy the last couple of days with the usual flock of last minute details that require my attention, that I have not had a chance to write you the letter I stated was following my wire the other night.

"After figuring up from the information you wired me in regards to the high wire act, also what some of my people who have seen same tell me, I think that a 26-foot pole will be as high as we can go with them in our top. I have secured two six by six timbers and rounded them up, and have them ready as far as possible to go until the act arrives. The railroad informs me they will be in tomorrow about noon, and I will put plenty of help to work on the rigging, etc. so as to have things ready for the opening performance if possible.

"As to Mr. Ringling's suggestion regarding tiger broken to ride on a revolving table, we have a young cub here that will be just the thing. This cub is about 8 months old now, and growing fine. Mabel Stark has been getting acquainted with him for a couple of hours a day, leads him around on a harness, and as soon as we get straightened away on the road, will commence to break him for this act, and am sure she will get good results.

"So far we have had a few individual clowns and girls that did not show up, also there will no doubt be a few that will not be satisfactory, and will have to be let out, this always happens with every show every Spring. I was like you in regards to the original estimate of \$2,700.00 salary limit for the dressing room, merely considered this as an approximate figure to base our engagements on. As I wired you, I do not think now that our payroll will much exceed \$3,000.00 at the Los Angeles date, including the high wire act, and it certainly won't be far over that figure leaving Los Angeles. I would not cut down the show or cancel any acts without first consulting Mr. Ringling, but will possibly have a couple of dissatisfied acts that may quit of their own accord. This was our experience last season.

"As you are in close touch with Mr. Ringling, and very familiar with his ideas as to performance, and his likes and dislikes in this regard, I am sure that it would be of considerable benefit to our show if you could arrange to catch us at Los Angeles, and remain a few days and help us to get everything exactly as he wants it. I will be a very busy man getting the show organized and moving, and will not be able to devote much time or attention to the performance, that is, as much as desirable, before we get into Los Angeles for our engagement there.

"When I figured up the approximate budget for the show for this year, I set the dressing room salary list at approximately \$2,700 or \$2,800, which was about the top figure for last season (considerably less than that before we closed), as a show this size only has a certain drawing power, and I did not want to have too expensive a performance.

But I am glad Mr. Ringling has no objections to stepping a bit over this figure, and I am certain we can get more than the additional entertainment value into our performance to merit the extra expense.

"Let me again say that I am pleased at all times to receive any suggestions or criticisms that are for the good of the show, as my sole interest and concern is to do things according to Mr. Ringling's wishes, and to bring the show in a winner. At this writing we are all set to go, and anticipate no difficulty in getting away to a fine start."

Pat Valdo sent an immediate telegram in response to this letter by Cronin.

"Regarding cutting down show and cancellations Mr. Ringling asks you consult him before doing this. This does not mean individual clowns girls etc. who have not made good. The twenty seven hundred salary list was simply a figure for us to work on. He would rather spend little extra for good of show than chisel down a penny. No criticism writing."

There was one piece of unfinished business that was being attended to, the promotion of the Broom Illusion in the side show of the Al. G. Barnes Circus. On March 20, 1930 Valdo wrote to Cronin concerning this matter. "Enclosed find circular that was intended to be sent with broom illusion. Personally I think it a mistake to expose this and finally Mr. Ringling decided to leave it to the various managers whether or not it should be exposed."

A similar letter was sent to the managers on the other Ringling owned shows at the Circus Winter Quarters in Peru, Indiana on March 20, 1930. Managers Adkins, Terrell, and Odom were sent a carbon copy of the letter that Cronin received with one addition. On the bottom of the letter Pat Valdo added "personal opinion that it is best not to expose it." Whatever income the exposure may bring to the sideshow was being counter balanced with the cheapening of the magic trick by revealing the secret of suspending a young lady in mid air.

The Al. G. Barnes Circus opened on March 23 at Baldwin Park, California. The route took it to Santa Monica, March 24; Whittier, March 25; Pomona, March 26; Riverside, March 27; San Bernardino, March 28; San Diego, March 29 & 30; Long Beach, April 1; Pasadena, April 2; Glendale, April 3; Burbank, April 4; and Los Angeles, April 5 to 13.

On March 28, 1930 from San Bernardino, California, Cronin wrote to Pat Valdo c/o Ringling Bros. Circus at Madison Square Garden, New York City.

"The show opened OK and without special incident, and everything is running along fine so far. The program of the big show has been running a bit long, which is usual in the Spring, but we are working on same and speeding it up and hope to soon have it down to the required running time.

"The high wire act is a sensation in our towns, and they seemed to be well pleased with the show, etc. The manager

told me that he did not want to come out here at first, because of the expense, etc. but now that he was here he was well satisfied. I have fixed them up the best I could as to berths, etc. which they appreciate. Have switched their act to close the show, the first couple of days I had it ahead of the ménage, and the audience started to walk out after the wire act.

"Have a good ménage number, and will get better, as some of the girls are green yet. Have ten of the posing girls riding ménage now. The posing acts are going over very nicely also. It seems that we have a few clowns too many for this style show, but will attempt to correct this until we get everything running in good shape. Post, Phillips, Klippel, Burson, Hartsell and Harris are very good clowns, but the others, except the midgets, do not shine very strong so far. However, everything is shaping up very nicely, and I feel confident that by the time either Mr. Ringling or yourself gets out here we will have an A#1 performance for you to look at.

"I received your letter and copy of spiel exposing the broom illusion, but as you left it up to me, we will not use it. Personally I am not in favor of tipping off such things. The patrons are getting too wise as it is, and if we were to explain everything there would not be any more mystery to attract them to the circus.

"We had some trouble getting the broom illusion working, no directions were sent with it, and neither our side show manager nor his inside man knew how to put it together as it had a piece left out. But we found a big show performer who understood, and then the gimmick the girl wears was too large for the one we had, so had to change that. All OK now, however.

"Tom Plank and his wife left for Peru [transferred to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus] from Los Angeles last Monday, should be there by now. This was on orders from Pat Valdo to 'send Plank to Wallace show as I have no one else in sight to operate Ford.'

"Trusting that the Ringling show had a successful opening and is showing to its customary big business in New York, and likewise hoping you will be able to take a trip out here and see us soon."

The side show of the Al. G. Barnes Circus for the 1930 season consisted of the following people: Henry Emgard, manager; Prof. Marshall's Colored Band and Minstrels; High Bill, giant; Prescott & Old, mind reader; Prof Show's Hawaiian Village; Mrs. Henry Emgard, snakes; Bert Price, tattoo artist; Mrs. Bert Price [Ethel], broom illusion; B. Windecker, Punch & Judy & magic; Prof. Louman, musical marvel; Miss Yuden, sword ladder; Roger Brothers, dwarf horses and athletic show; Mr. & Mrs. Manley, fire eater & cartoonists; and the Klinkhart's Midgets.⁶

A brief review of the Barnes show appeared in the June 1930 *White Tops*: On 30 cars. Spick and span and dressed to a nicety in true Ringling style. Big Play April 6-13 in Los

Angeles dates two weeks after opening. Carrying 8 elephants including Tusko. Featuring Gretonas, high wire act from Europe; Mabel Starke and big tiger act; Cossack riders in concert. Opening in two parts, "Persia" and "Pekin" staged by Rex Rosselli; Klinkhart's Midgets still big card. Tusko works in ring; fine horses. Capt. Jacques has lion act and Lorraine Roos, leopard and stallion number. Tiger and lioness riding elephant and aerial lion. Mark Smith and Matlock troupe acrobats; funny auto and clowns. After show concert "Parisian Review" and the Cossacks.

Shortly after the Los Angeles date started Cronin wrote to Valdo at Madison Square Garden.

"I have not written you or Mr. Ringling lately as I thought perhaps one or the other of you could arrange to come out here. Everything has been running along OK, the big show program was running a little long, due to the new acts, likewise additions to the ménage and liberty act, so that it took about two hours and fifteen to twenty minutes, but by speeding up and shortening some numbers we now have it down to two hours running time. The performance seems to be giving satisfaction. The German high wire act is the hit of the show, as it should be.

"The broom illusion that was sent from Sarasota was in very bad second hand shape, and some parts were missing so that we were never able to get it to work. As you know, Thayer, the magic supply man is now located here [Azusa, California], and is about the best in the business for his work, so we had him build us a new broom illusion complete for \$90.00 and are using same in the side show now. We are shipping the old one back to Sarasota, as there is no use of us carrying it around the country. We sent the Sarasota office a check for \$75.00 as they billed us, before trying it out. If they paid this or any other amount for it, they are entitled to a refund, as it was not in usable condition. By the same token believe we are entitled to credit or refund for the \$75.00 paid by us.

"Trusting that you will be able to get out to see us, also that business and everything in New York is satisfactory."

For whatever reason, John Ringling required that the broom illusion be included in the sideshows that he owned. While some antique apparatus was secured from the Sarasota, Florida winter quarters, it does not appear that the act was included on the R.B. & B.B. sideshow nor on all of his side shows. The idea of giving away the trick was left up to the individual show managers, and along with Pat Valdo they agreed that the spiel that would accompany the exposure of the trick would not be used.⁷

John Ringling, the show's owner, and Pat Valdo, John Ringling's personnel manager, implemented the changes that were required to improve the 1930 Al. G. Barnes Circus. Manager Cronin was hoping for the best and he apparently pleased John Ringling in helping to build a quality circus that took the road in April 1930.



The Sparks Circus was situated in the Central City Park, Macon, Georgia on the east coast and John Ringling placed manager Ira M. Watts in charge. He reported to Ringling on January 20, 1930:

"With regards to your letter of the 18th regarding [Frank] Woska. I have today signed him up at \$70 per week, contract reading as follows: 'Train and work wild animal acts and to superintend the care and feeding of the wild animals and to take charge of menagerie if desired by management.' This of course road salary. Quarters \$30.



Animal trainer Franz Woska.

Author



Cover for the Sparks Circus program of 1930.
The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

"Woska seemed to feel that the arrangement you made with him was merely to take charge of the animals and elephants, and that he was not to work animals at that salary—but he is now okay.

"Am in touch with [Walter] McClain to take charge of the elephants as we are going to need him—he asked \$50, offered him \$40, but will get him some way, if Sparks don't buy the Downie Show (he is up there now) and steal him first.

"Shall we send Woska on to Peru to pick out two or three tigers and get them down here? This really should be attended to so that he can start breaking them in. Will appreciate a prompt answer.

"Had a letter from Connor, former side show manager, wanting to know about going ahead and getting up side show—he says that Pat received wire from you while in Gainesville to engage him, and that you would arrange salary or percentage later, says he wrote you Dec. 23rd but received no reply. Last year he received 5% of the gross sideshow receipts, ¼ of gross on sword box—he received for his bit salary \$2,841.60, and \$313.53 on sword box—a total of \$3,155.13 We really should know about him as have quite a little correspondence to forward to whoever the side show manager will be.

"Things are moving along nicely here now. The following bosses for next season now in quarters and working: Singleton, Boss Canvasman; Posey, Boss Hostler; Phillips, Boss Ring Stock; Golding, Cook House; Cole, Trainmaster; Koen, Lightman—working on coaches; Noble, Blacksmith; Sawyer, Asst. Baggage Stock.



Edward Kelty photographed a group of clowns on the Sparks show in Port Chester, New York on May 4, 1930.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

"Following engaged and not working: Boss Porter and Dining Cars, Gary Vanderbilt; Front Door, Kritchfield; Banner Man, Green; Time-keeper & Commissary, C. L. Perrin; Games in Privilege Car, Bell; Candy Stand, Robert Worth;

Adjuster, Kelly (engaged by you); Hamburger Stand, Whitie Carroll; Band Leader, Everett Johnson.

"Am dealing with, but not yet closed: Elephants, McClain; Props, Flynn (here for several years and understand

Ira M. Watts

Born in Fair Haven, Missouri in 1895, Ira Watts joined the James Patterson-Gollmar Bros. Circus as a time keeper in 1917. After service in World War I, Watts returned in 1919 as Treasurer of the James Patterson Wild Animal Circus and served in the same capacity on Mike Golden's 1923-1924 Golden Bros. Circus, and Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus. John Ringling asked Watts to join Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1927. On Christmas Day 1929 John Ringling informed Watts that he was to be the manager of the Sparks show, and Watts said he would be in Macon the next day. Watts showed his resolve during the 1930 season when on the show's opening jump out of Macon, an arch bar broke on the flat car carrying the cookhouse and stable equipment. Watts fed



Ira Watts.

Buckles Blog

the people in restaurants and housed the stock in the side show tent until the flat car was fixed. For the 1931 season, Watts reframed the Sparks show to travel on 15 cars, omitting the parade and spec and becoming the first show to use recordings in place of live band. In 1932 he went to Sells Floto as Assistant Manager and was the same on the 1933 Hagenbeck-Wallace, and the 1934 Al. G. Barnes show. He was Manager of Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1935 and Ray Marsh Brydon's Rice Bros. in 1937. In 1938, with Charles H. Parker, Watts bought Bud Anderson's Seal Bros. and rebuilt the show as Parker & Watts Circus, touring through 1940. He later was manager on the Clyde Beatty Circus and the Kelly-Miller show as well as Superintendant for the King Bros. in the mid-1950s. Ira Watts died in 1967 in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

one of best bets as he has quit liquor); 24 hour Man, Bennett (contract not yet returned).

"Have listed above just the main men, and hope that they meet with your approval, as all of them are old timers with the exception of the Band Leader who is young (29 years old) but has some nine or ten years directing bands and everyone have written regarding him boosts him—Odom [manager of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus] says if he did not have Woeckner there that he would take Johnson for that show."

A listing of the Sparks show people who were re-engaged for the 1930 season included:

"Charles Barry, \$60 (\$35 in Winter), Equestrian Direc-

tor, break and train and work domestic animals; W. C. Guice (six people) \$400. Walter C. Guice and six people do aerial bar act of five people, comedy riding act. Two lady principal riders. Two men to go in parade. No horses for parade. Mrs. Guice excused from closing spec. Guice to carry three horses and one dog; Eva Hill, \$25, swinging ladder, ride ménage, parade and specs; Ruby Hoyt, \$35, Work elephants, swinging ladder, ménage, parade and specs; Frank Philips, \$25, Works domestic animals, parade and specs; Harvey Spaulding (three people), \$110; Polly Watkins, \$35, ménage, swinging ladder, parade, specs, work in elephant act; Paul Wenzel (three people), \$150; Rink Wright due, \$90, One novelty equilibristic act. Both to go in opening spec; Mrs.

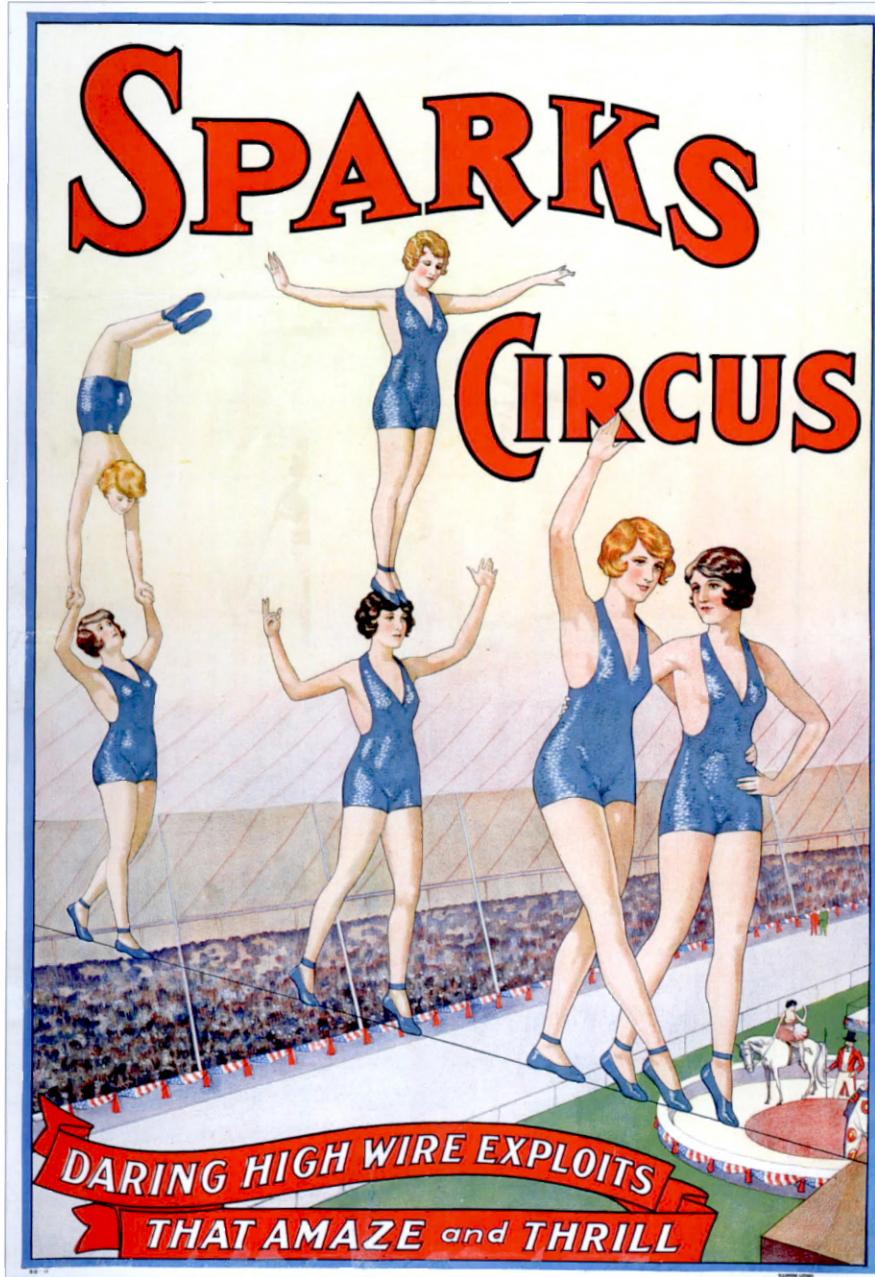
S. Butcher, \$15, swinging ladder, ménage, Wild West, parade and spec; Carlos Carreon (three people), \$150. Take charge of wild west. Furnish six high school or high jumping horses. Mrs. Carreon to ride ménage, high jumps and work in wild west concert. Also furnish one first class cowboy and all wardrobe to be first class. All to go in parade and specs. Three horses to go in parade. Salary \$150 per week on the road. Mr. Carreon to break liberty and ménage horses in winter quarters at salary of \$30 per week. Show to pay groom on the road. Board for horses and groom in quarters to be \$360. Show to shoe horses but Carlos Carreon to furnish the shoes; Foster & wife, \$70. Jim Foster to work in Wild West, parade and specs while Mrs. Jim Foster, swinging ladder, ménage, Wild West, parade and specs; Trude Lomax, \$20, specs, parades, work in concert, ride jumping horses and do trick riding.

A listing of the people not re-engaged for the 1930 season included:

"Arnesens (2 people), \$100, Balancing act, comedy acrobatics, parades and spec; Sig & Della Bonhomme, \$60.00, Sig to clown all through the show, produce walk arounds and stops. Della Bonhomme to ride ménage, do swinging ladder and work domestic animals. Both to go in the parade and specs and to be generally useful. Additional arrangements: Della Bonhomme under separate contract to have charge of wardrobe at salary of \$10 per week; Anna J. Ledgett, \$15, parades, specs, swing ladders, ménage; H. P. Smith (Pewee), \$35, clowning, parade, specs; Nelson Family (seven people), \$350 and \$35 to Sasse weekly, Seven people Big act to work alone. Wire act. Two girls for swinging ladder. Two girls, one boy for ménage. Three girls, one boy for pa-

Illinois Litho printed this poster for several of the 1930 shows including Sparks.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



rade. Four girls, one boy for spec. Private dressing room, private table in cookhouse. [Their agent Charles Sasse of New York City was to be paid his commission weekly]; Joe Lewis, \$60."

Ira Watts wrote to Pat Valdo c/o Mr. John Ringling on February 9, 1930 in Sarasota, Florida.

"I believe I neglected to tell you that Mrs. Thompson (formerly Miss Skaggs) signed a contract which you sent up for \$25.00 per.

"We had a run of bad luck last week in that we lost one whole pig act of five pigs. The veterinary claims they were poisoned and all died within the space of two hours. Takes five or six weeks to break them and that many minutes to lose them, but we have bought five more pigs and starting in anew. We are having the state ascertain just what poison these pigs got hold of and in the meantime are looking out for poisoners. The rest of the pigs and everything else is O.K."

Valdo received a letter from Ira on March 22, 1930 regarding the arrangement of the acts.

"Your letter of the 20th received, and was mighty glad to get it. Know that you have been worked to death getting the different shows lined up and will be glad when it is all finished.

"Pat, Charley Barry [equestrian director] seems to think that the way you have three of the acts lines up it will slow up the program considerably, and I agree with him, and am enclosing a copy the way he suggests to see what you think of it.

"You said for us to use our domestic acts where we saw fit, and you will note that we are putting Chariot dogs, and wire walking dogs in ahead of the Leopard and riding dog acts. Reason for this is due to fact that we had to get up chutes, get leopards into arena, and the aerial contortion will want to try their riggings, and they would not be able to do this and also go in tournament and we need them there.



Phillips' trained pigs at the Macon winter quarters.

Author

"Don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but our elephants take four cages down to the train nights, and these must go down fairly early or stall everything there as these short cages have to load a certain place, and putting elephant act where you have it would stall the train about 20 or 25 minutes which is a lot. It's true that elephants do cut up ring some on rainy days, but it has to be very muddy for the small elephants (which work in centre) to hurt that ring, and the proportion of rainy days would be such that it shouldn't pay to delay us getting out of town.



Elephants were often used to pull the wagons to the Sparks train.

Author



Horses at the winter quarters.

"Way we would like to have it is to have elephants where they used to come—our No. 12, your No. 10, as this way Guice act comes in while elephants are doing the long mount on front track. Way you have it laid out would have to be a clown act between Guice act and elephants to enable horses to get out before elephants came in.

"You would also have some fill in between pigs and Guice in order to get pigs out. That's delay between both of these acts, but the biggest difference is on account of putting elephant act two acts later than formerly and delaying train and stalling show.

"DON'T FURNISH US ANY SEALS, Please—we have three pig acts working now, and haven't any place where we could carry seals if we had them without a whole lot of switching on equipment and we are overloaded now with the equipment in tents furnished by the Ringling Show as it all

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takes more poles and bigger canvas all the way through. To take the place of the Steam Calliope we had to make another dog wagon



Performer at winter quarters.

Author



Sparks ring barn in Macon, Georgia.

Author



Clowns and showgirls in 1930.

Author



Sparks performers dressed for spec.

Author

for dogs and pigs—our understanding was no more seals, and we have made seal den into cage for hay animals, letting them double at night in front of same and use the back end for side show birds and snakes to and from the lot.

"Pat, I don't want to go against your best judgment, but don't you think that maybe you can change the program around as we have outlined it, as that will enable us to move the show out of town quite a little quicker, and also put more speed in the program.

"Am sending one copy of this to the Bronx, and the other copy to Forest Hotel c/o [Fred] Bradna so that you will get it quick as possible, and will you please wire us immediately upon receipt of same to either use the program you submit or the one we are sending you, and we will then send same to the printers and be governed by your instructions."

Watts wrote Valdo in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on June 13, 1930 from Norwich, Connecticut.

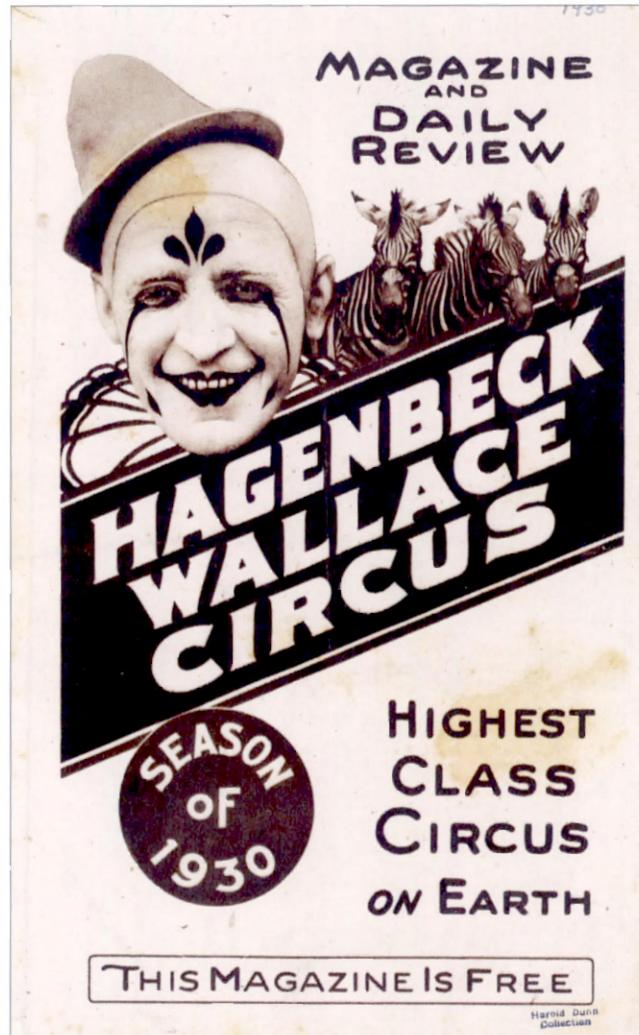
"Wish you would arrange to send us another ménage rider and swinging ladder girl—that is, one girl to do two acts. The reason for this is due to the fact that Woodward and wife "blowed up" on us to-day which would be all right except Guice is replacing Smilella next week and of course the wife will go with him and that would leave us two girls short. Can get along without one and really need only one girl.

"Mr. Meyers and wife are leaving Sunday. Show moving along fine and everything going OK except that business conditions have been terrible with us and we can't afford to pay any high salaries. The two midget clowns you sent over are very good....P.S. We are not furnishing 'Billboard' with route in future."



The management of multiple circuses placed Pat Valdo over C. Dan Odom, the manager of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus that was at the Peru, Indiana winter quarters. His responsibilities, like those of the managers of the Barnes and Sparks Shows, involved personnel and new acts on the 1930 show.

On December 9, 1929 Manager Odom wrote Charles Kannely, rather than Pat Valdo, in Sarasota, Florida about hiring a husband and wife team of midget clowns. "Alva L. Evans is a dwarf clown who received \$25.00 per week on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. His wife was also a midget and a good attraction for the sideshow who received \$25.00 per week." The two were asking for a joint salary of \$70.00 per week, and Manager Odom stated that "their contract could be renewed for the same terms as last year?" With a handwritten P.S. he wrote on the bottom of the letter "Midgets good attraction."



Cover of the 1930 Hagenbeck-Wallace program.
The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Performers of the 1931 Hagenbeck-Wallace show were photographed by Edward Kelty in Brooklyn.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Ring stock at the Peru winter quarters.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Manager Odom wrote Valdo on February 3, 1920 regarding the spec for the year noting that he "would like to know if Mr. Ringling has decided to have a Spec with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus this coming season. It is very important that we should know whether there will be a Spec or not for it is very hard to get singers that are capable of singing under a tent."

Likewise Odom was concerned with the Wild West Concert and wrote Valdo on February 9, 1930. "It is important that we should know this for there are a great many of the Wild West people that double in the big show, riding ménage and high jumps. Also let me know if Mr. Ringling hired the Australian Waites. I forwarded him their correspondence sometime ago from Chicago. If Hagenbeck-Wallace is to have a Wild West Concert would like very much to have these people."

It was not until February 18 that Valdo wrote Odom: "Confirming wire sent last night to Mr. Terrell, Mr. Ringling has decided to have a Wild West concert again with Hagenbeck-Wallace show, so you can go ahead with your Wild West people. Hope to have some more information for you later in the day." The next day Odom sent a telegram to Valdo noting "Shall I contract Wild West for Hagenbeck or will you do it from Sarasota—Advise."

In some cases it took about 10 days for a reasonable response from Sarasota regarding negotiations. On February 9, 1930 Odom wired John Ringling asking about the flying act.

"Just arranged with [Herb] Flemming as per your request to split up big flying act of nine people that I had contracted. Flemming will furnish two flying acts five people each for six hundred seventy five dollars week and carry

Dan Odom

Charles Daniel Odom was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1882. He started as a buggy boy with the John Robinson's Circus from 1900-1901 and then moved to concessions on the 1902 Great Wallace Circus. In 1903 and 1904, Odom worked concessions on the Harris Nickel Plate Circus. He moved to Assistant Legal Adjuster on the 1905-1906 Great Wallace Circus and was back on concessions for Wallace in 1907 and 1908. From 1909 to 1919, Odom worked as a promoter



Dan Odom.

Buckles Blog

for a number of carnivals. He rejoined the circus business as part owner and manager of the 1920 Howes Great London Circus, then part owner and manager of the 1921 Yankee Robinson Circus. In 1922 Odom served as Manager of the Gollmar Bros. Circus and was Manager with the 1923 John Robinson's Circus. In his final circus position, Dan Odom served as Manager of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus from 1924 to 1930. After retiring from the circus, Odom ran a coin machine business. He died in Chicago in 1944.

one extra girl to work ladder and teeth act also in flying act making eleven people in two acts. Flemming can contract a flyer for his act that will do heel and toe drop good as Ernie Codona for fifty dollars week extra. Advise me at once for Flemming wants to know so he can get extra catcher also flyer for second flying act."

Odom wired John Ringling on February 19, 1930 regarding the flying act. "Fleming agrees to cut price to two flying acts to six hundred fifty dollars same number of people sayd [sic] he cannot furnish two smaller acts for he is not equipped with rigging net or people and that he has one act intact as per our agreement and that he cancelled fair on those conditions. Understand from people that saw show last week in Detroit [Shrine Circus] that Flemming has better flying act than Mayme Wark [Ward]. If satisfactory to you I would like to come to Sarasota and have personal interview with you."

There were two quick letters between Odom and Valdo on February 10 and February 11, 1930.

"I note what you have to say about the midget clowns and I hope you will have success in getting them.

"If you should hear of anyone that can operate the Funny Ford I will be glad to advise you and will have them get in touch with you. I do not know of anyone at the present time. I would advise you to write to Earl Shipley for he worked with the Funny Ford last year and no doubt he may have a line on someone.

"We discontinued the firehouse last season and used a clown band with Shipley playing slide trombone with bucket of water instead and it went over much better than the firehouse. Let me know if you want to put the firehouse on again and I will have the property man build one again to your specifications.

"Did Mr. Ringling engage the Swartz Riding Act from Europe for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show to take the place of the Hobsons? At the present writing we have only got the Hodgini Troupe as far as I know.

"You mentioned in your telegram of Feb. 5th that you were forwarding singers and ménage riders correspondence. Up to the present writing we have not received same."

Valdo's response on the 11th to Dan Odom's letter of the 10th covered a number of additional subjects.

"SEALS—Huling losing all his seals in fire complicated this matter very much as it was intended to use his acts with Floto show. I hope as you hope that the deals will do a good act and we are making every effort, and I believe from what I hear that they are getting along good on the coast.

"SPEC—Will be practically same with new name. Rex Rosselli is contemplating a few changes and will let you know later in the day what he says regarding the singers.

"FIRE HOUSE—Do not have one made as the band the way you did it I think just as good. I was merely figuring on available big clown numbers for the various shows. I have

another number in mind that won't take any props to speak of and will be as good as fire house in case you need a big number.

"STATUES—Mr. Ringling will be here tomorrow and will try and have him decide about making hoods here or in Peru.

"CONCERT—Mr. Ringling had in mind a midget concert for Robinson's show and Wallace show and will impress on him how important it is for you to know about this.

"Swartz riding act is engaged and present plans are to use them on the Floto show.

"Mr. Terrell also would like the Waites for Sells Floto show. If the demand for boomerang throwers keeps up I will have to break in a few acts myself. The wood choppers are under consideration and as they now do whip cracking and boomerangs also we will probably be able to arrange this O.K.

"Tom Plank has built a Funny Ford for the Barnes show but will not go with show and if we can get him and his wife is O.K. with you he will do to operate Ford with Wallace show.

"Expect Mr. Ringling back tomorrow and will forward all information I can."

The question of the quality of the riding act on the show was still up in the air when Odom wrote to John Ringling on February 26, 1930.

"Joe Hodgini is a fair rider and his act consists of himself and three people; two ladies and one man. Hodgini is a



An ad for the Decorah, Iowa shows.

Author

HAGENBECK-WALLACE CIRCUS



Wilno was a top attraction for Hagenbeck-Wallace's 1930 season.

**DARE DEVIL
WILNO
"The HUMAN
PROJECTILE"**
A LIVING PERSON SHOT THROUGH SPACE
with Violent Velocity from **THE MOUTH OF A MONSTER CANNON**

A Positive Sensation **TWICE DAILY IN THE BIG SHOW**

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

somersault rider and principal rider, his wife a poor rider and the girl does not do anything. They are doing jump ups in the ring barn with mechanic. Hodgini has not got the other man rider and says that he will have him ready and be glad to have me interview his act in the next three or four days when he gets the other man rider who had been working with the Riding Rooneys. His name is Schirmer. Will wire you more information when I see the act in action. The above information I am giving you is from conversation with Hodgini today and when I saw the act last with Yankee Robinson Show, it was not much and their wardrobe was not up to standard. Hodgini says that he will have better wardrobe." Odom's handwritten note on the bottom of the letter stated "Hodgini says he will have a good act this season."

Wirth & Hamid Inc. sent a Western Union telegram to John Ringling on February 20, 1930 noting that two acts that he was interested in were now available.

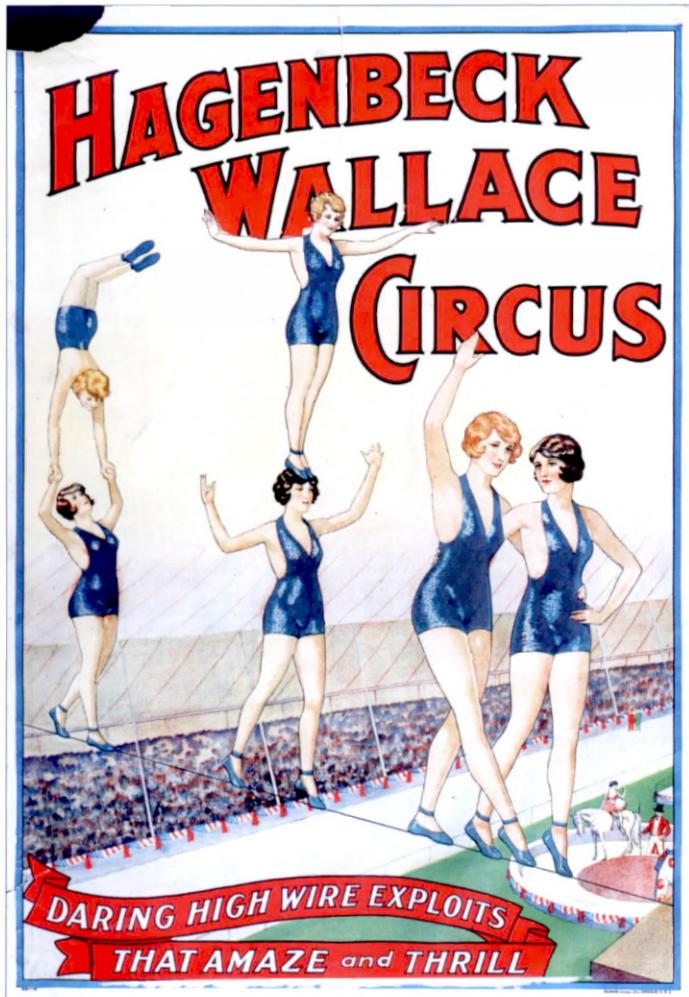
"Secured Wilno two hundred fifty net you pay us five percent total cost to you two hundred sixty two dollars fifty cents biggest bargain you ever secured. Wilno bringing from Europe duplicate flyer as assistant uses forty rubbers each rubber costing six dollars average breaking ten rubbers week. Claims now flying about hundred twenty five

feet. Have signed act. Wire confirmation send contracts arranged shipping company to advance Wilno's assistant transportation. Wired Monge Troupe your offer have urged they accept."

On February 24, 1930 Odom wired John Ringling stating "only way we can figure loading cannon on train would be to take off seal cage. Terrell says that he can use Hagenbeck seal act. I would prefer having man shot from cannon as feature than have seal act if you decide on making change advise me loading space for cannon on train."

Valdo wrote to Odom on February 26, 1930 since "Mr. Ringling has asked me to advise you that your solution to the cannon problem is very good and that he will dispose of the seals intended for Wallace to the best advantage. Will have photos and all measurements of cannon and will rush them to you at Peru as soon as I receive them."

On February 24, 1930 Frank Wirth & George Hamid Inc., the agents of the Wilno Cannon Act, wrote John Ringling confirming their wire noting the details on the Wilno Cannon Act. "Length of cannon with back case, 26 feet 8 inches; Length of Barrel, 25 feet 8 inches; Centre of wheel to box in back, 10 feet 3 inches; Outside Width of wheels, 7 feet; Height of Cannon, 8 feet 9 inches; Can be adjusted so that TOTAL LENGTH OF CANNON IS 5 feet 6



This generic wire act image was used on bills for several of the 1930 shows.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

inches." The next day a second letter "referring to our letter of Feb. 24th, regarding Wilno, kindly note correction. The Cannon can be adjusted so that the TOTAL HEIGHT OF CANNON IS 5 feet 6 inches."

By February 27, 1930 Valdo advised Dan Odom that "Mr. Hathaway has wired you loading length of cannon but do not think he had height at the time he sent you the wire. It has two sets of wheels which as I understand can be changed easily for loading. The larger wheels are seven feet wide which would make the cannon eight feet nine inches high when loaded and with the smaller wheels it would be five feet six inches high when loaded. Of course I cannot guarantee these figures as we have received them from Wirth."

On March 1, 1930 Odom wrote to Valdo with concerns about the loading of the train.

"I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 26th and note what you have to say about the cannon act.

"I will be pleased to have at your earliest convenience photo, also the number of feet required on train for loading

the cannon act; our train space with Hagenbeck Circus is limited for we only have fourteen flats and it keeps a person figuring how to load train so that the show can move properly and get out of town without any delay.

"A good seal act is a wonderful thing with an animal show but I do not think that the seals that Cronin is breaking in California will be up to standard, however, I may be wrong.

"I was told the printing company in Chicago was getting out a feature bill of a wire act for Hagenbeck Circus. Advise me if we will have such act with Hagenbeck Circus.

"The ménage and ladder numbers will be practically the same as in the past and the cost will be practically the same."

Valdo replied to Odom on March 4, 1930.

"Regarding the loading the cannon Mr. Ringling thinks you may be able to let barrel of cannon overlap wagon in front or rather leave space in wagon that loads in front of cannon for cannon barrel but I doubt very much if you have any empty wagons with Wallace show. He merely mentioned this the other night and I am passing it on to you. Have mailed you photos and measurements of cannon which no doubt you have received by now.

"The wire act referred to is probably high wire act pending for Barnes show.

"Do not think Mr. Ringling will do anything with Joe Hodgini after getting your reports."

The problem with the position of the cannon was not solved until Odom wrote Valdo on March 11, 1930.

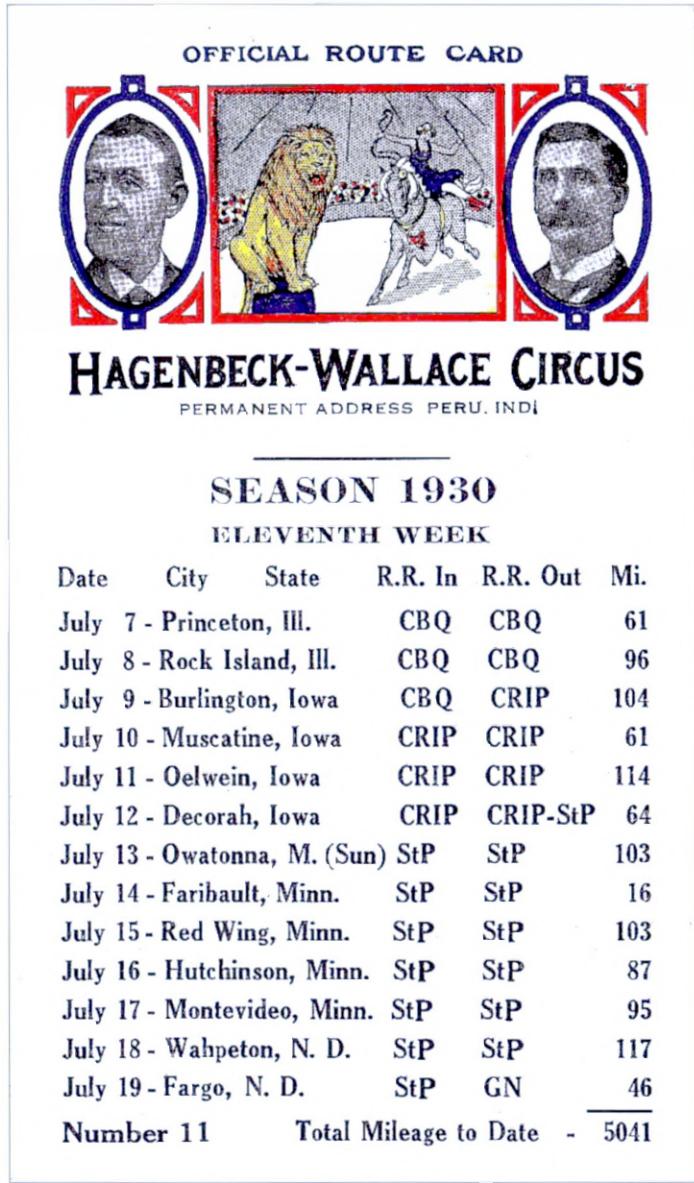
"Regarding the cannon. I will use the Funny Ford and let the barrel of the cannon project over the top of this Funny Ford. The body of the Ford is very low and I do believe that this will work. We have no empty wagons with Hagenbeck Show. In fact, we are over loaded.

"I also note what you have to say about the high wire act and what you said about Joe Hodgini.

"I could not understand you over the phone last night. There was a lot of buzzing in the phone at this end of the line. I am trying to get in touch with Herb Flemming to find out if he could possibly make the switch in his act, with three Concella [Concello] people flying act. Art Concella [Concello] is a wonderful flyer. In fact, is as good as the Thrillers but is a very hard young man to handle. He is under age and has been spoiled. I do not really know who he has as a catcher and if his wife is going to work in the act with him she is not much. This boy would be a wonder in the proper hands of somebody that could handle him and develop him."

The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus needed a few more clowns, a riding act and some generally useful employees. Dan Odom on March 18, 1930 wrote to Valdo about employees.

"I received a clown contract made out to Robert Wallace for \$20.00 a week. This man, Robert Wallace, was chauf-



1930 route card for Hagenbeck-Wallace.

Author

feur and candy butcher on Hagenbeck-Wallace Show and I do not think he is capable as a clown. Of course, we can let this man report and if he is not up to standard we can let him go. Am calling your attention to this fact so that you would know we will be one more clown short than what will be listed.

"I am in receipt of a letter from Wallace Cobb. This man, Cobb, has worked for me in the past and is a pretty fair clown and very handy man around the show. I am advising him to write you at Sarasota, Florida. I have used him in several departments. He has railroad experience and is capable of loading our train in case of a pinch. I have also used him as combination boss porter and clown. If you can see your way clear I would like to book this man. I paid him \$25.00 a week for clowning in the past. His wife can do spec and ladder. If you do not care to book him in Sarasota I will do business with him direct. Enclosed find Cobb's letter."

Filling employee positions was a concern of Odom's letter to Valdo on March 31, 1930.

"I am in receipt of a contract from Al. G. Barnes Circus for Tom Plank. Cronin advised us that he had orders to have Plank report here for Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Peru, Indiana, to operate the Funny Ford. Cronin also billed me for \$189.21, Tom Plank's railroad fare to Peru, Indiana. Advise me if this is to be charges to Tom Plank. Tom Plank expects the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus to stand his expense from California to Peru, Indiana and also expects his salary until the opening of Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Tom Plank basis his claim that he opened the season with Al. G. Barnes Circus.

"My Wild West program is practically complete. I would like to get hold of a good whip cracking act for my Wild West. Let me know if you have a good one in mind that you could recommend. I have an application from the Clarkes but they are not reliable. They have been with the show before."

A hand written note closed the letter. "What about riding act for H & W Shows we have only got Albert Hodgini"

Odom's next letter to Valdo on April 6, 1930 was addressed to R.B.B.B. The Coliseum, Bronx, N. Y.

"Enclosed I am sending you a copy of the Hobson Riding Act contract with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus as of our 1929 season. Reads as follows: To furnish one comedy riding act of five people: two Indian riding acts five people, artists to furnish wardrobe for extra rider in the Indian riding act. All to go in spec, and parade and entry and too make themselves generally useful under direction of the equestrian director, artists to have three lower berths. Salary \$250.00 week jointly.

"The reason I am sending you this is to call to your attention the extreme difference of the 1929 contract and what is wanted for the season of 1930. I will get in touch with Hodgini and reopen negotiations with him.

"I am glad to have the statue tables built as per information you gave me. Would be pleased to have you get in touch with lady you will put in charge of these statue numbers, also advise me poses used in statue numbers and necessary props to put statue number on. I don't mean the tables, etc., I will take care of that here."

As the show was getting ready to open Odom recounted some new problems to Valdo on April 29, 1930.

"I would like for you to get me a man to be assistant on props with the Hagenbeck Circus. I am in need of a capable man mighty bad for Melhouse is getting so fat that he cannot get around. I am also afraid that he will not be able to make it out on the season. I would like to have you try and get me a good boss property man capable to handle props and men under him, and you can tell him I will give him the props with Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus if he makes good."

Dan Odom considered the problem so grave that he

sent wires to Valdo on April 30 & May 1, 1930 regarding the prop boss. "In need of assistant boss property man bad, Fat is sick and don't think that Fat will be able to go through season would want man that would be capable taking Fat's place if necessary." This was followed by "Send assistant boss property man to show."

A new problem arose and on April 29, 1930 Odom noted to Valdo that "the Monge Troupe arrived, seven working and a disappointment. I am now buying them wardrobe for the comedy acrobatic act."

The Monge Troupe were secured through the Frank Wirth and George Hamid Inc. talent agency. On March 3, 1930 John Ringling was advised that "Owing to their Vaudeville route they will not be able to open for the New York Season, but will open May 1st, for Hagenbeck-Wallace Show." On March 14, 1930 Frank Wirth advised Pat Valdo that the Monge Troupe was "to go with the John Robinson Shows instead of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus." The troupe eventually was secured for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus however Dan Odom was having problems with the artists. He telegrammed Valdo that he was "writing you letter giving you routine of Monge Troupe they refuse to be measured for comedy wardrobe for comedy act. Rosselli told them they

Dan Odom photographed this performer at winter quarters.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



would have to pay for their wardrobe and they refused and their comedy acrobatic number is terrible. They do not try for they don't want to do that number two act."

Odom's letter to Valdo on May 5, 1930 spells out the problem.

"The Monge Troupe have nine people on the show; seven people working in the act. They refuse to pay for necessary wardrobe for comedy act. Routine for comedy act by Monge Troupe is terrible and they claim that their contract does not call for a comedy act and that is their reason for not wanting to buy any other wardrobe for comedy. It was really so bad I took them out until I could get necessary wardrobe. Would be pleased to have you advise me if it would be Mr. Ringling's wishes for me to insist on them paying for this wardrobe. Routine of main act as follows; No. 1 full pitch-backs, No. 2 pyramid, No. 3 bridge —they do the same as when you show them, No. 4 some ground tumbling, No. 5 single to the shoulder one high, No. 6 hand stand two high which they do not hold once in ten times, No. 7 a girl doing a double to shoulder that they do not make more than once in three times, finishing with a triple to chair which they do not make more than once in three times and it takes the catcher holding the chair and two other people to back him up. The Monge Troupe is getting all they are worth \$300.00. I deducted for two people that they were short at the opening. If you remember they only had five people working in Kokomo when you were there. I also had a complaint from them that they would not stand of this and showed me a telegram that Wirth & Hamid told them to report in Cincinnati. The two extra people is [sic] one girl and one old man. I am using the girl in the entry and spec and she is inclined to be the spokesman of the troupe. The Monge Troupe also advised me that they do their number one act as per contract but do not care to do comedy which I insisted that they would have to do. I would be pleased to have you advise me also how far to go with this troupe and whether it would be Mr. Ringling's wishes to force the issue in making them pay for comedy wardrobe and keep their troupe up to standard."

Manager Odom also noted "I have been trying very hard to cut the show down on the time but on account of the usual stalling of the cannon it is running two hours and fifteen to twenty minutes. It is too long [a] show for us to have where we have to move in one section, especially where we have long runs for our sleeping room for working men to handle the show is limited."

Odom was frustrated and he confided in Valdo in his May 6, 1930 letter.

"I am writing this letter for your information regarding the Monge Troupe. Their contract calls for two acts. Mr. Hauser asked me to translate into Spanish telling them that their contract calls for two acrobatic acts. I translated this for Mr. Hauser to the boss of the Monge Troupe and they



Performer from the 1930 Hagenbeck-Wallace program.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

absolutely refuse to do the comedy act. First claiming that they did not have the wardrobe, then I told them we would furnish the wardrobe for them and later on in the season they could gradually pay for it. We had a man here from De Moulin Costume Company ready to take their measurements and again they refused to go into the comedy act. Our wardrobe lady, Mrs. La Rue, is making four clown suits. At this time I do not know whether they will do this act or not as they have flatly refused to do it so far. I am writing you this, Pat, to tell you the true conditions as I have interpreted all this into Spanish at request of Mr. Hauser the Equestrian Director."

It did not take long for a letter dated May 7, 1931 [1930] to be forwarded from Pat Valdo to Dan Odom from the Ernie Young Agency of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Young booked acts and he was just about to throw gasoline on the Monge Troupe firestorm. The letter was sent to Pat Valdo c/o Ringling Bros. Circus, Brooklyn, New York.

"Dear friend: I thought I would have heard from you by this time regarding the MONGE TROUPE but I suppose you have been so busy you did not get time to write me. However, I do hope that by this time, you have adjusted things with the MONGE TROUPE so they can open for me

on my Fairs in August. Would you be kind enough to let me know what you did about it?"

The next day, May 8, 1930, the Wirth and Hamid Inc. agency wrote the Monge Troupe c/o Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Bloomington, Illinois.

"Dear Monge:

Your telegram was received by the writer on my return to town today. Your previous letters and telegram, to all appearances, gives us the impression that you are rather radical in your demands. To my way of think[ing], I believe Mr. Ringling has treated you wonderful. First you made a contract for nine people, then you reduced it to eight, and now you are only using seven people. Just how do you expect to get along like that? You have a contract with Mr. Ringling and he insists that you live up to it. If you have one person short that is your fault and not his. He is paying you for eight people. Furthermore, you cannot expect to go back to vaudeville when you have a circus contract. Contracts cannot be broken today like in the olden days, so don't try to get yourself into any trouble.

"We understand you were asked to do a comedy act to even the matter up for having a lesser number of people than you contracted for, and you don't want to pay for the comedy costumes. Now for goodness sake, get right down to business. Do the comedy act. You are getting the best of the deal all the way through. Please confirm to us this understanding, and can assure you further that if you do not co-operate with the people you are now working for, you surely would not expect us or our associate offices to give you work at parks or fairs. Think this matter over very carefully."

The matter appeared to be settled with the Monge Troupe, but six weeks later the problem came back to really annoy Dan Odom as he wrote to Valdo on June 23, 1930 from Marion, Ohio.

"The Monge Troupe notified Mr. Brown, also Mr. Hauser, Equestrian Director, that they were leaving at Hammond, Indiana. They have also wired and written several letters to different booking offices to get placed at fairs. I have been advised that what they had in mind to do before we took up the adjustment with them of doing their act as per contract. Mr. Hauser advised the Monge Troupe that there is no clause in their contract about giving two weeks notice to quit. I have been told that they would do their act so rotten that we would be forced to let them go although since we had the talk with them they have all been appearing in the act and doing same very satisfactorily. I will absolutely need some kind of an acrobatic act to complete that number and give the show strength for I am just in receipt of contracts to play Fargo, Grand Forks, Regina and Milwaukee Fairs. My advice would be to have strong a show as possible in playing these dates for it is not like playing one day stands for naturally we will have in those week stands a world of



Hagenbeck-Wallace spec performers in an undated photograph.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

critics especially newspapermen. In case the show should want to repeat the following year independent we must have a strong show and leave a good impression. I will do all in my power to hold this troupe together but I doubt whether I will be able to do so providing they get favorable answers from some of the booking offices. I also sent the treasurer to get the names of all the aliens in order to make application for aliens to enter Canada and the Monge Troupe refused to give their names and customary history that has to be answered in making our reports. You see for yourself how stubborn they are when they want to be.

"I will be pleased to hear from you as early as possible about this troupe. My suggestion would be to get in touch with Wirth & Hamid and find out what kind of a troupe they could furnish us to re-place and perhaps we could get Wirth & Hamid to transfer them to the Sells Floto Show where they would have a stage to work on which would no doubt satisfy them."

The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, C. D. Odom, Manager, sent a telegram on June 24, 1930 to Frank Wirth at the Wirth & Hamid, Inc. office in New York City.

"Monge Troupe notified us that they were leaving the show at Hammond, Indiana July fifth. I am advised that they are going to play fairs also negotiated with other booking offices would like for your office to wire them that you will take out an injunction against them restraining them from working any fair dates if they do not fulfill their contract with circus also call their attention to the fact that there is

no two week clauses in their contract. Advise us as per route what your reply was to Monge Troupe."

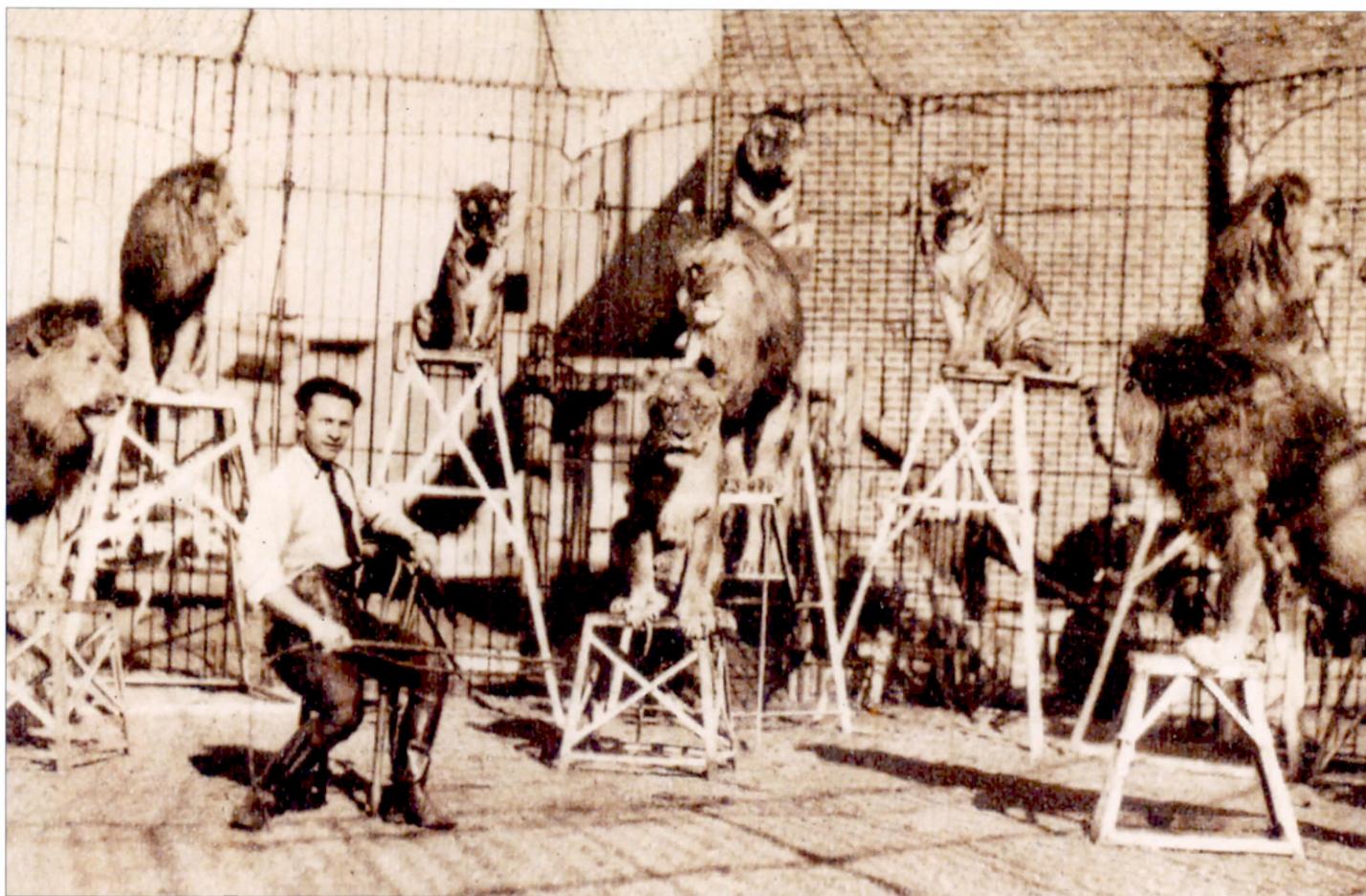
On June 25, 1930 Wirth & Hamid sent a telegram to the Monge Troupe c/o Hagenbeck Wallace Circus, Bellefontaine, Ohio.

"Hagenbeck Wallace Circus advises you are leaving show at Hammond Indiana July fifth. You have an entire season contract and we insist you fulfill same. Will hold you for full amount commission and will take out injunction restraining you working elsewhere. You have no two week clause in your contract furthermore if you are negotiating with fair bookers will immediately have those booking cancelled. We have instructed our attorneys to proceed unless you notify us that you intent fulfilling entire seasons circus engagement."

The 1930 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus program listed: Display No. 4, Ring 1 - "The Monge Troupe, burlesque comedy acrobats in a series of laughable antics" and Display No. 25, in the arena, "the incomparable acrobatic troupe, The Monge Troupe." It is still unknown if the group stayed the whole season or was replaced by another acrobatic troupe.

A review of the circus appeared in the June 1930 issue of the *White Tops* giving some additional information on the show employees and program.

"Ye editor of the *White Tops* saw his first big white tops of the season in Evansville, Ind. when Hagenbeck-Wallace were in May 7, their tenth stand of the season. Everything spic and span brand new, clean and fresh and a much larger



This Lentz Bros. image of Clyde Beatty was used in the 1930 program.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

outfit than last season, a Ringling touch here and there and everywhere and the best program and most novel that Manager Dan Odom has had in years. Of course it was a huge day for there were hundreds on the lot we knew. Sam Clau- son was in the office early that morn. Well we missed him at the runs. We were leaving the office for the day, also early that morn (no work circus day) when we met Rex de Roselli [sic] over from the John Robinson to see how the spec and statues he staged for H-W were moving.

"Business hadn't been marvelous but Evansville gave a fair matinee and nice night crowd. Manager Dan Odom was as always most genial and it was a pleasure to see and be with him again. Herb Duvall was assisting and looking to the legal end. Eddie Delvan, a trifle heavier, but as good looking, dapper and pleasant as ever, is still in charge of the front door. Steward Carroll had a nice lunch that day.

"Allen Hauser, equestrian director, moves the fine big program with dispatch.

"The opening spec and pageant is most colorful and elaborate with a world of extra lighting equipment. 'Golden Orient' is what Rex de Roselli, producer, calls it. George and Alice Sohn, who used to warble on the Sparks show, are leasing the singing. Pat Salmon's good voice is heard there, too.

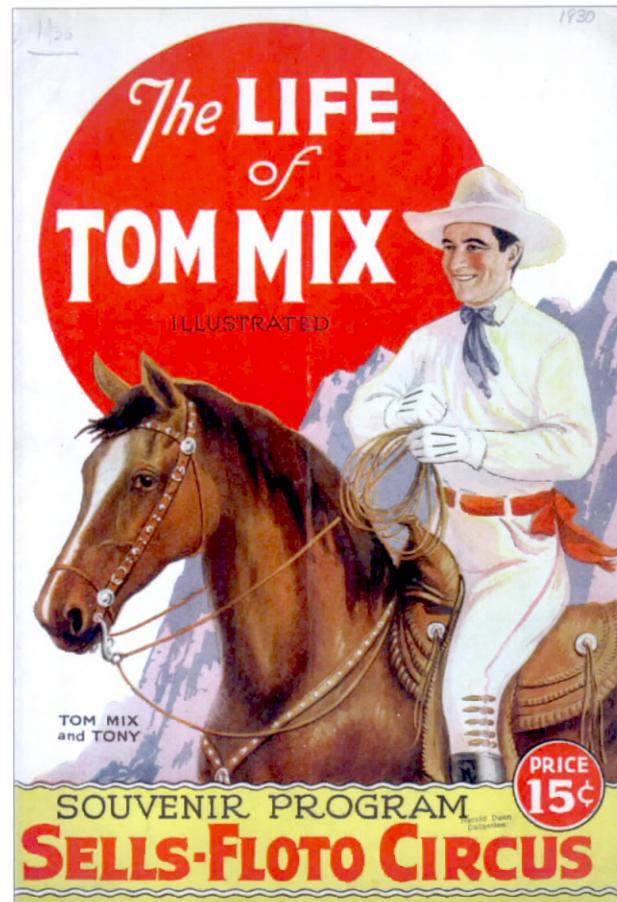
"The program: Ponies and dogs in end rings and in steel

arena center mixed cat group by Cap Bernard; Fronzel Trio; Six Potters, hat jugglers; elephant on track carrying man by his head in its mouth; Swinging ladders, 20 or more girls all in white; Clyde Beatty scoring big with 32 lions and tigers, just week before was attacked, arm still bandaged; Clyde gave great show, thunderous reception; Elephants and pony in end rings; Early Shipley and clown band; Liberty horses, Austin King and Earl Sutton; Jap acts, Matsumotos; Frank Shepard single trap sensation in heel catches; Earl Shipley and funny auto; beautiful artistic, elaborate statues in each ring; Jap foot slide; Three group fine trained elephants; Berta Besson on wire scoring as usual; Iron Jaw numbers, five; Albert Hodgini and family riding, with Harriette, a wonder girl; Japs and Mongee [Monge] troupe acrobats; A great ménage number with thirty or more women all dressed similar, grey effect, pretty; Clowns good; Two casting flying acts by the Flemings; High jump horses, races and then Wilno shot from cannon for the great finish; Eddie Woeckener had all eyes on him in concert with his band and again through show; Harry Leviston had side show; Mary Bevan, world's homeliest woman, just joined after arriving few days previous in Boston from London; Huge negro giant, four pinheads, Gossart sister, fat girls, white giant, and other entertainers; George Ringlin, announcer.



The Sells Floto Circus was located in the circus winter quarters in Peru, Indiana. The manager of the show was Zack Terrell, and like his counterparts of the other newly acquired Ringling property he reported to Pat Valdo. On January 29, 1930 Valdo wrote to Zack Terrell who just returned from a visit to the Sarasota winter quarters.

"At Mr. Ringling's request, I am writing you to have you go ahead and engage the girls for the ladders, ménage and iron jaw. You will have four girls out of the Ward act for iron jaw. Will send all correspondence pertaining to this matter to you and you can select your own girls, as you formerly have done.



Cover for the Souvenir Program.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Edward Kelty took this photo of the performers in the 1930 Sells Floto Circus on August 27 in Newark, New Jersey.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

"Clowns and acts Mr. Ringling will continue to engage here in Sarasota.

"Wish you would have your side show manager send a list of his people and photographs as soon as possible, to this office, as all side show banners will be made here."

Terrell was looking to hire some local talent in a letter January 30, 1930 to Valdo.

"Ruby Orton is here in Peru. You know she is an A No 1 ladder performer and a fairly good ménage rider and makes up fairly well. I also have Celia Fortune's address. I wish you would find out if there are any objections to my contracting these two women as it looks like women are going to be a little bit scarce this coming season. Kindly let me know at once."

Valdo responded on February 4, 1930 to Terrell.

"Mr. Ringling is in the north and I would advise that you hire Ruby Orton, also Celia Fortune, because, as you say, ménage riders and ladder girls are quite scarce. I personally think it would be the best thing to engage them and I will take the responsibility.

"Will send you list of people contracted and all information I possibly can later in the day. Please excuse delay in replying but have been at Tampa fair."



Tom Mix and others at the Peru quarters.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Terrell wrote in response on February 7, 1930.

"Your letter received regarding Ruby Orton and Celia Fortune. I will try and do business with both of them. Ruby Orton is here in Peru now.

"Pat, I am enclosing you a letter from the Australian Waites. I would like for you to give me some quick action on this letter of theirs. I think these people are very reasonable and I understand they are clever. I believe they would be a wonderful addition to the Tom Mix concert and their whipcracking and boomerang throwing from the stages. I would advise contracting these two people at that salary. Let me know what you think of them as I am holding up their answer."

Zack Terrell

Born on a farm near Owensboro, Kentucky in 1879, Zack Terrell first attempted to join a circus at the age of 14, spending a few days with the W. T. Collins Circus. In 1904 he worked as a candy butcher on the John Robinson's Circus, then was employed by Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1908. By 1912, Terrell was serving as assistant to Manager Jerry Mugivan on the Howes Great London Circus. The following year he managed the Sanger Great European Circus. From 1914 to 1919 Terrell was the Assistant Manager of the John Robinson's Circus. In 1921 he became Manager, and for a time part owner, of the Sells-Floto Circus. When Ringling bought out the American Circus Corporation, Terrell stayed on as Manager of the Sells Floto Circus until 1932. After a few years managing Standard Oil Company's "A Century of Progress," Terrell partnered with Jess Adkins to frame Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty show in 1935. They also ran Robbins Bros. in 1938. Terrell continued to run the Cole show after Adkin's death in 1940. In 1948, Terrell sold the show and retired to his ranch near Owensboro. He died in a hospital in Rochester, Minnesota in 1954.



Zack Terrell with Tom Mix.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

On February 15, 1930 Mr. Terrell's general press representative W. B. Naylor wrote to Valdo since he and Mr. Terrell were in Chicago at the Hotel Sherman on business.

"We are sadly in need of pictures of Tom Mix and this morning Mr. Meighan asked me to write you because he said I would be sure to get service from you. We first need pictures of Mix in the outfit he will wear at the pajeant [pageant] in Sarasota for which Mr. Gumpertz has something to do. This picture is for the Shrine advertising for their night at the Coliseum in April, early in the month.

"I also need a number of photos for our newspaper and press department. Last season he had nothing when he joined but Movie shots. I got a few in Boston and on the road but they were used up. Will you be so kind as to get Tom into line and give me some good circus shots of Tom any horse can be used for Tony.

"I know you must be very busy down there but Mr. Meighan said I would get action if I wrote you. Please rush along whatever you can get for me and I will place an order for quantity later."

Additional clowns were always an asset and Terrell forwarded a letter to Valdo regarding Stanley J. Ross.

"Enclosed you will find a letter from Stanley J. Ross... Stanley is a little midget clown that has been with Joe Kassino. He can work in the center ring riding with a mechanic—he did this last year a while and is very good. I would like to have him on the show. Don't think you will find any difficulty in cutting his salary down to where you think it belongs."

The letter from Stanley Ross of Detroit, Michigan reads as follows: "Dear Friend Valdo, Your letter received at hand, of recent date, and am answering you immediately. Just figure out the expense Mr. Valdo. That counts too. The expenses I figure on paying at least the half of what I am to get.

A Kelty photo of the Sells Floto elephants in 1930.



"I can afford to reduce the salary to \$45.00 that's the best I can at present. I can't go very low cause you can figure out the things that I have to pay. For instance like:—The Water Boy, The Electric Boy, The Property Boy, etc. What have I left for myself I've got to live, and besides, I have to pay laundry, hotels, take a bath, and so on. I couldn't save a bit, if I reduce my salary so I could see my way clear. All I can do and say is I can reduce \$5.00 dollars of the salary I asked for... I haven't got much wardrobe I only have one clown suit and the rest you furnish. How's that! Do you agree on that? Let me know."

In addition to employees Terrell was in Chicago arranging for the opening date at the Chicago Coliseum. His February 21, 1930 letter to Valdo noted that "We use the John Robinson's Circus spotted Liberty horses in the buildings; also the John Robinson elephants. In regard to Pallen-berg's bears—you know we will have to have a special cage: so as soon as you find out for sure wish you would give me the number of bears and the size of the cage we will have to have. We have always engaged some of the clowns from the different shows for the building—I would say 8 or 10 if you can get them."

Terrell also scouted the Chicago Stadium and wrote to Valdo on February 28, 1930.

"I have notified our band leader to only use 22 men, including myself, and a calliope player for the Chicago buildings engagements, as per your instruction.

"We have had wild animal acts in the Coliseum every year, starting in 1923. While Beatty has a wonderful act, I believe it would be impossible to put the cages in the menagerie in the Coliseum to use this animal act—as you understand it is impossible to have a chute up there and we have always taken up some little carts and brought the animals down out of the annex along the side walk to the middle

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Complimentary ticket for the Chicago show.

Author

door, which made it a dangerous and difficult proposition. Therefore I would advise that we eliminate the wild animal acts this season in the Coliseum. I think also that our patrons in Chicago are a little tired of our wild animal acts in the building.

"We now have, including one stock car and one elephant car from the John Robinson Circus, a 29 car move to Chicago. You understand we take all of our coaches up there, for that is where we get our help for the road.

"Note what you say in regards to the sleeping car proposition and that you would let me know in the next day or two. The reason we wanted this coach is I arranged with Mix to load his horses in one of our regular stock cars. Then we could leave that Tony car here in quarters, as it only sleeps 40 people the way it is now. You remember there is only one vestibule on this car and we would have to cut windows in this car and put in some more berths which we could do, however. This Tony car was formerly an advertising car.

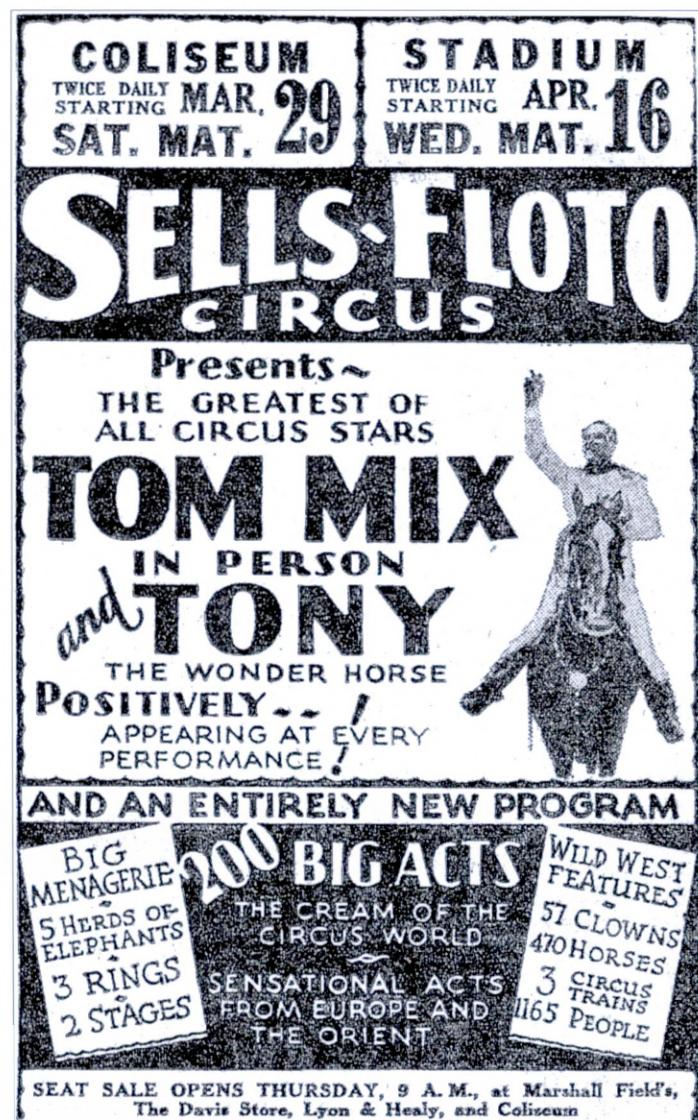
"With the John Robinson elephants we will have 21 elephants, 19 camels, a water buffalo, and 17 cages in the Coliseum which will fill that place up very tight.

"I figure on putting up a four pole menagerie at one end of the Stadium. It will be impossible for the people to see this menagerie on the come-in, but we might figure some way after the show is over to let them pass out thru the menagerie. We will also put our pad room up at the other end of the Stadium. This is the only way I can figure it out. It would be nearly impossible to take the Beatty act in these buildings in Chicago."

In mid March 1930 telegrams were flying between Terrell and Valdo. On March 19, 1930 Terrell proposed, "We use five elephant acts in Coliseum and Stadium, three John Robinson acts worked by Stella Cronin, Madge Zumwalt, Billie Burton and two Sells Floto acts worked by Lillian

Burslem and Betty Stephens."

Valdo wired back, "Mr. Ringling advises not to raise Mable Pelke salary. Horse trainer settled tomorrow. Use



Right, an ad for the Chicago performance.

Author

Robinson spotted horses for building and use your judgment what other stuff you want for building elephants etc. Advise Odom he will have Wild West Concert. Robinson concert not decided yet."

On March 25, 1930 Terrell wired Valdo. "We had arranged for 3 triple teeth acts and 2 singles if you put Mabel Pelke in the center we cannot use all of our teeth actors. Would it be possible to let her work alone advise. Three seals on each stage they are not very well broke. Can use sixteen liberty ponies in center ring six liberty ponies in each end ring in the seal number—advise."

On March 28, Manager Cronin of the Al. G. Barnes Circus wrote the Sells Floto Circus at the Coliseum in Chicago regarding a financial issue. "We have received your check for the seals, etc. and note that you are deducting for the wrestling tiger at the price of \$1,500.00. Now, we would not have let you send us the tiger at this price. Our understanding with Mr. Adkins was that the tiger was there and would be left in Peru, where it would be of only cage tiger value, which is not much at present, but that if we wanted it, we would be charged whatever price was put on it by Mr. Ringling. We had a wrestling tiger here, and sold it to the lady that broke it when the other arrived for \$500.00. We would consider that figure a fair price for taking the tiger off your hands under the conditions. We are aware that this tiger once was transferred on the books for \$2,500.00 – but it is not worth that, or even \$1,500.00 to us at this time. Of course, we expect to pay whatever we are directed to by Mr. Ringling, but until we hear from him, we must protest the price of \$1,500.00. It was all right for you to deduct same, as we presume you are carrying this figure on your books against us, but we do not consider the tiger matter adjusted at this figure."

On March 29, 1930 Terrell wired Valdo. "Dress rehearsal went over very good beautiful wardrobe and quite a few favorable comments on the show." He followed up with a long letter that same date. "In you wire you asked me my opinion of the show. I wired you back I had heard some favorable comments.

"Now we positively have no outstanding feature

with this show, and the Schwarz Riding Act is a very ordinary riding act. Of course, the Hollis-McCree act is nothing from a comedy stand-point. Hodgini has a fair act, which I have placed in the center ring in the comedy riding number.

"Both of the Ward flying acts are in the net half of the time—The Thrillers are wonderful, which you know.

"The Picchianis is a very good act, the Cervantes just fair. Lot of youth in the act, well dressed and some style.

"The Waters, Shubert and Babe Mascoe, Clara Cordona and White head balancing trapeze is very much unbalanced.

"The Juliettes perch act fair, positively refuse to do the second act, say they have no second act.

"Our tournament is very good, wardrobe the best we have ever had.

"What are we going to do about some riders when we leave the Stadium? Please keep this in mind as the Schwarz three people riding act is all we have. We have 20 minutes of Wild West with Tom Mix, about the same performance that we had when you saw our concert last season, maybe a little better."

While the show was still at the Chicago Coliseum Terrell wrote Valdo on April 12, 1930:

"I wish that you would call Mr. Ringling's attention to the matter of the Picchianis contract.

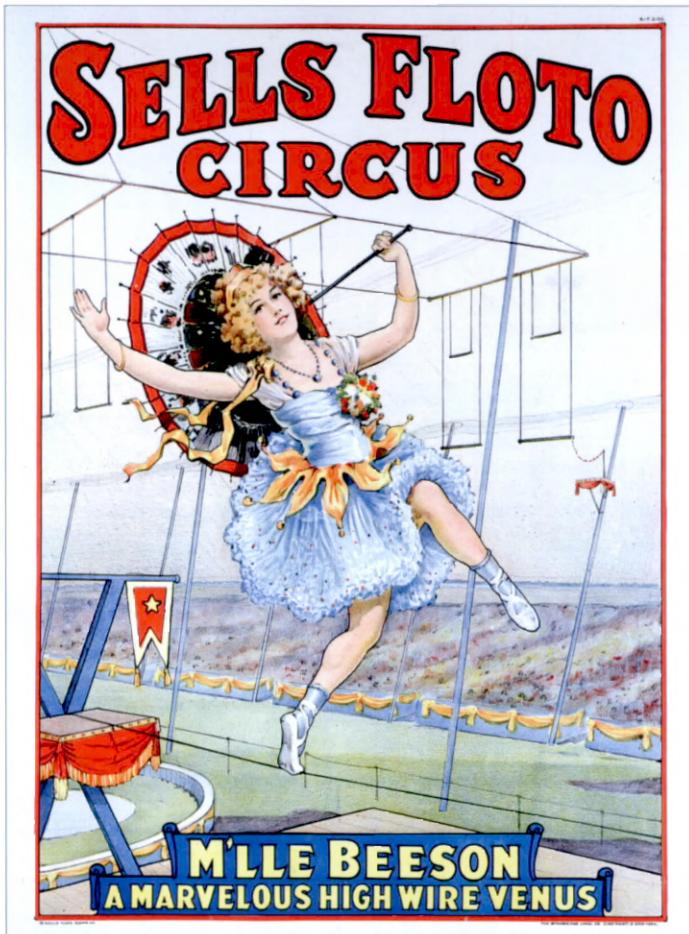
Author

The elephant Big Eva in a small newspaper blurb.

Making Headway Against the Storm



GRAND TRUNK SYSTEM!—"Big Eva," circus elephant, is shown pushing a stalled automobile out of snow-blocked alley after timely arrival on the scene. Doing five men's work is just a circus to this powerful beast.



Berta Beeson was one of the featured attractions in 1930.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

"The Picchianis are signed on Ringling Bro. contract, which is different from the Sells Floto Circus contract. You can note on the Sells Floto contract which I am enclosing paragraph 4. Then note the Ringling contract, paragraph 3. The Picchianis will not sign a Sells Floto contract."

"Take this up with Mr. Ringling and advise me at once if I should pay the Picchianis a full week next week when we move from the Coliseum to the Stadium and lose the Monday and Tuesday."

"Picchianis claims that the Ringling show paid them full time if they lost one day, two days or three days. This is the only person that I will have any trouble with, as he is not signed on our contract. These two days of course comes out of everybody else on the show."

The response from Valdo on April 15, 1930 straightened out the problem.

"Last year when we moved from New York building to Boston Garden we lost Monday Tuesday and Wednesday, three days which was deducted from all performers salaries and this year we will lose two days and two days will be deducted."

"Talked this over with Mr. Ringling last night and he requests me to inform you not to make any exceptions in

Picchianis case. Two of the Picchianis wives will be in Chicago shortly, one to go in tournament for her board. This one can probably do ladder act if you need it but of course that will be up to you. The other has ridden Roman races here for years at \$25.00 weekly and if you need her for races will have her."

"Could do nothing about Aerial Youngs. Have been trying to dig up another rider or two but no one around here."

Replacing staff on the road is always a problem. Terrell wrote to Valdo June 26, 1930 from Battle Creek, Michigan.

"Now in regard to the Thrillers, I would not worry about the flying acts with this show. The Thrillers positively say they are going to stay with the show and I am going to pay them \$325.00 per week, as per contract which they signed for next season, starting August 1st. But even if they should leave we can move the two Ward acts up over the stages and by with the flying acts. So in my opinion you can forget the flying acts with this show."

"Picchianis leave the show August 9th. If you could get a good Arab troupe of 6 or 8 people or some other good acrobatic act to fill their place I would think it would be all O.K. If you cannot get a good first class act, I would advise Arabs. They could do pyramids, tumbling and finish on the track with cartwheels. I would think you would have no trouble in getting a good act together."

"Now in regard to Pallenbergs, they leave August 2nd. Last year I had two good comedy bicycle acts, one on each stage. I got them very cheap and they fill the bill. Two or three people in each act. You might do the same to take the place of Pallenberg."

"Our business was very bad in Michigan—people have no money. Hope this information meets with approval. I might be able to dig up these Arabs for you in case you would want me to if you would want them to take the place of Picchianis."

A brief review of the Sells Floto Circus opening was printed in the May 1930 issue of the *White Tops*. "Chicago Coliseum, March 29, at Stadium April 16 to 26. Grand entry gorgeous affair with Tom Mix in lead; mule comics, dogs, Fonza trio, DeKoes, O'Neil trio; Elephants 5 herds; Romanys, Koban, Mantillas, The Shuberts, Rawlet & June; Lovellis, Sisters Schwartz, Reno Melvin riding troupes; Pallenberg's bears; Berta Besson on wire; 3 Kimball Sisters, 3 Burslem Sisters, 3 Barnett Sisters, Mabel Pelke, premier aerial gymnast; 3 group liberty horses; The Arleys, Wright duo, Juliettes, 3 Grantos, funny Fords on track; seals by Firth and Noble; Swinging ladders; John Shubert, The Walters, Tom Mix and his Wild West; Neiss troupe on the high wire; Hollis McCree, Otto Griebing, novellis; Albert Hodgini, riding troupes; 35 ménage horses, High jumping horses. Pichianis troupe; the Cervantes; Irma troupe; 3 Flying Thrillers and Flying Wards in casting acts. Races. Zack Terrell, manager, Fred Ledgett, equestrian director. Vic Robbins, band."

**John Robinson's
Circus
1929-1930
Peru, Indiana**

Winter Quarters

Jess Adkins, the manager of the John Robinson's Circus at the Peru, Indiana winter quarters followed protocol when he received a letter from Mrs. M. Cottrell regarding employment on December 17, 1929. His response was that the "performers for all the shows are being engaged at Sarasota, Florida and I am today forwarding your letter. You will no doubt hear direct from there within a few days." For this performer it was a two month response time for Pat Valdo did not send her contract until February 17, 1930. However Miss Cottrell was hired and the program listed her in ring 2 of display #7—A diminutive Shetland pony displays unusual ability in performing with an Arabian equine in the classic Big and Little Act.

On January 8, 1930 Manager Jess Adkins commented on a recent meeting with John Ringling at Peru, Indiana:

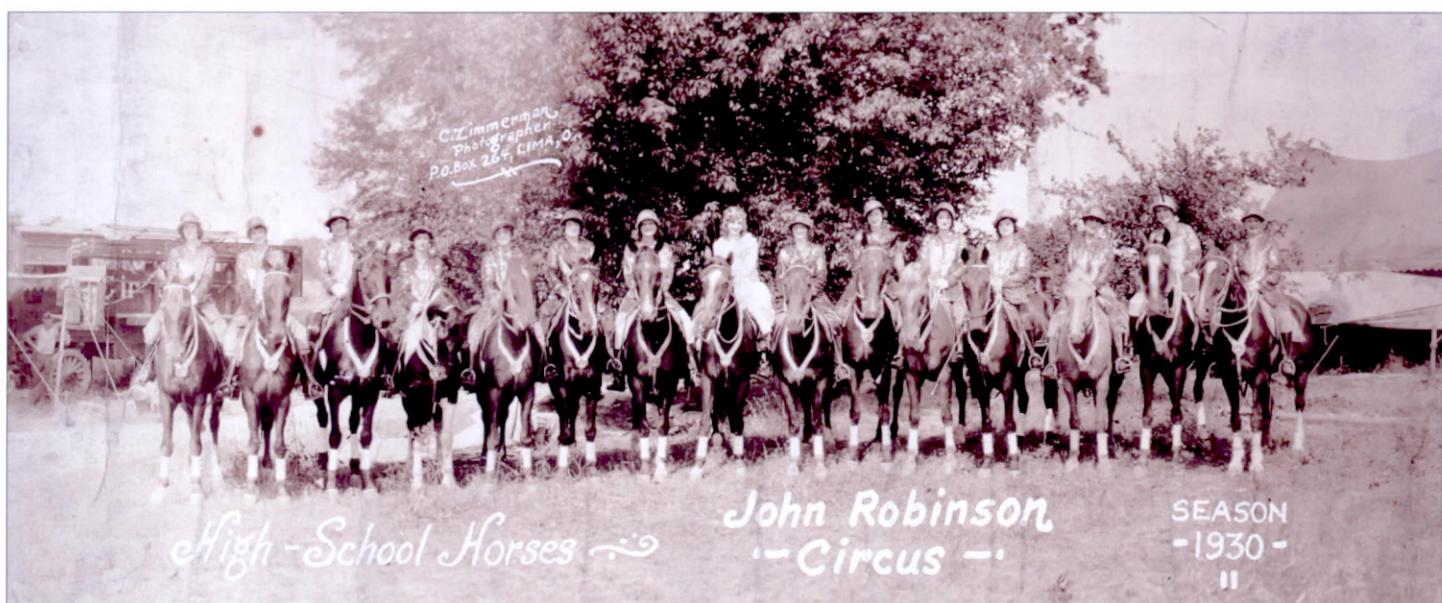
"When you were here we talked over the matter of



A 1930 ad for the Canton, Ohio show.

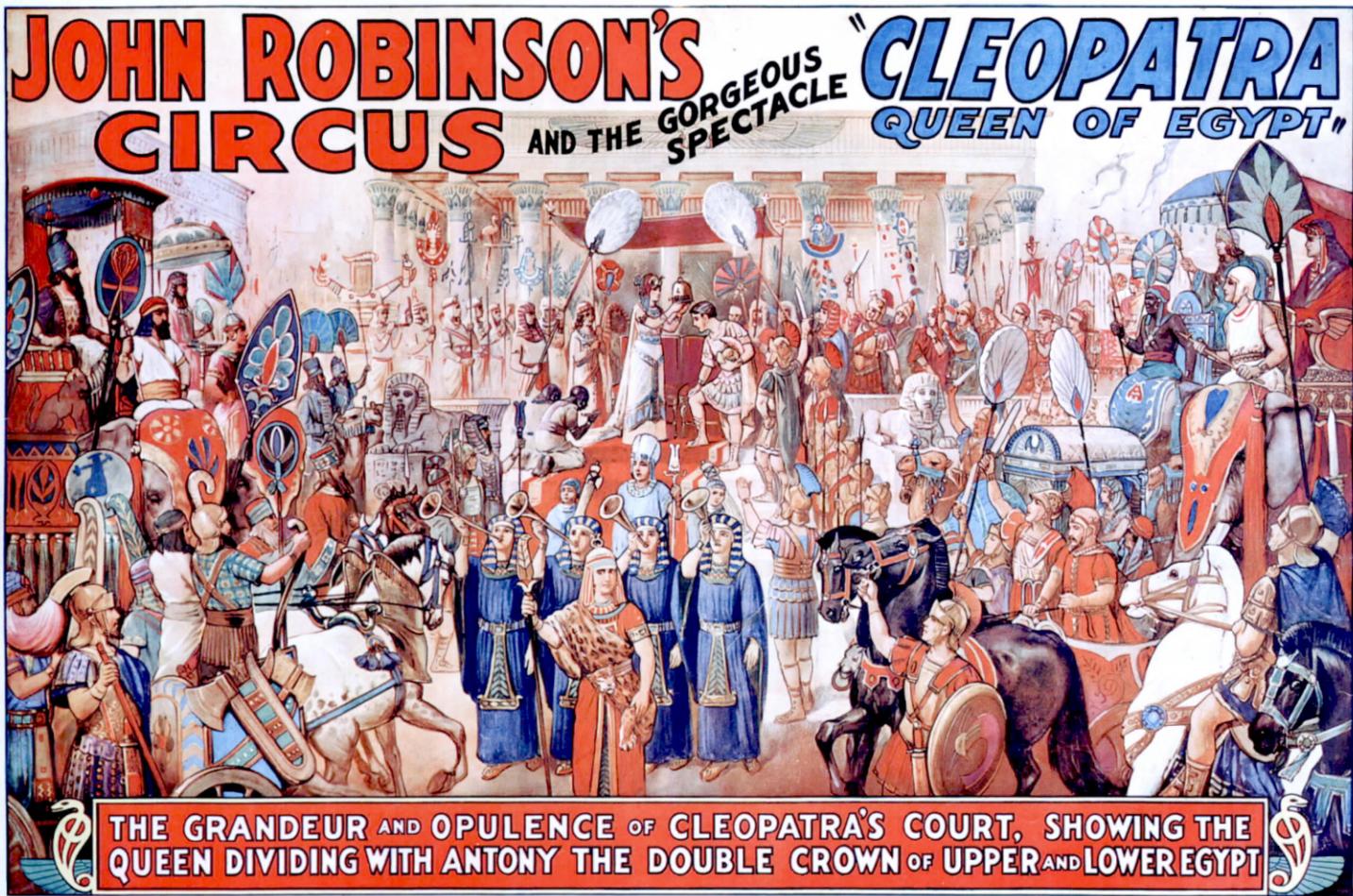
Author

changing the opening spec on the John Robinson's Circus the coming season. You advised me that you would let me know about this a little later. We have always used two good singers in this spec, one lady and one gentleman. I am en-



C. Zimmerman shot this image of the John Robinson's High School Horse performers, including Dorothy Herbert at center.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



N. GLOSHOGRAPHED IN U.S.A.
ERIE LITHO.
ERIE, PA.

THE GRANDEUR AND OPULENCE OF CLEOPATRA'S COURT, SHOWING THE
QUEEN DIVIDING WITH ANTONY THE DOUBLE CROWN OF UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT

ERIE LITHO & Ptg. CO., ERIE, PA. 1928

Erie Litho printed the poster for the Cleopatra spec.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

closing herewith a letter from Mrs. Alice Sohn together with a copy of my reply there to. Mrs. Sohn and her husband are both good singers. They were with the Sparks Circus at the opening of last season. I believe Mr. Gentry is cutting down his expenses eliminated the opening spec and put on simply

a tournament so he let these people out about the middle of the season.

"You at one time spoke to me in regard to putting some midgets with the John Robinson's Circus. If these are going to be available and you intend to place them with the John

Jess Adkins

Jess H. Adkins was born in Van Buren in Grant County, Indiana in 1886. He joined the 1905-1907 William P. Hall Circus and was on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus by 1910. Adkins was an accountant on the 1911-1914 Ringling Bros. Circus and then Treasurer of the Hodgini Circus in 1915. The following year he was the Manager of the Howes Great London Circus. In 1917 he spent one year as Treasurer of Coup & Lent before joining the U.S. Navy from 1918 to 1920. He returned to the circus business in 1921 on Howes Great London.



Jess Adkins.

Buckles Blog

In 1922 Adkins was Assistant Manager of Gollmar Bros. Circus and from 1923 to 1924 he was with Gentry Bros.-Patterson Circus. After spending 1925 on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Adkins returned to Gentry Bros. as Manager of the 1926-1927 show. In 1928 he was Assistant Manager on Sells Floto Circus and became Manager of 1929-1930 John Robinson's Circus. Adkins became Manager of Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1931 and stayed in that post until 1935 when he partnered with Zack Terrell to present Cole Bros. Jess Adkins died of a heart attack in Gardner, Massachusetts in 1940.

Robinson's Circus we could build an Oriental Spec and make use of these little people to good advantage. Mr. Rex de Rosselli, who has always produced the opening specs for all these shows, is now in Peru and expects to remain here the balance of the winter.

Letterhead.

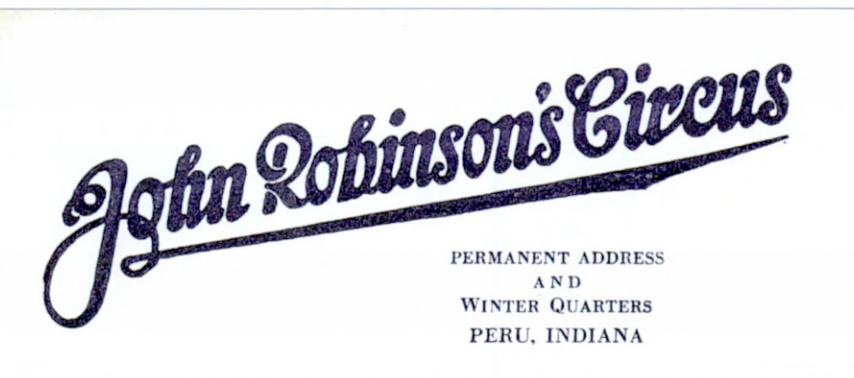
He has some very good ideas and I am sure could put on a very pleasing number for the John Robinson's Circus with the use of these midgets.

"Our wardrobe lady, Mrs. Orr, started to work the first of the year. She is going over the wardrobe now and has a couple of women ripping off jewels, ornaments, etc., from the wardrobe which is worn out. She has not started to build anything as yet. I will have her make the necessary repairs to all wardrobe which we can use the coming season for all the shows.

"Of course, Hagenbeck-Wallace has had a Japanese Spec for two years. I do not know what your intention is in regard to their opening number, but if it is to be changed we will necessarily have to build them some new wardrobe. As far as Sells Floto is concerned, we will go ahead and fit out their tournament the same as last year."

On January 18, 1930 Adkins wrote Ringling about needing special skilled employees:

"Last season we had a clown by the name of Lawrence Anderson who operated our Funny Ford after the party who owned it left the show. Mr. Anderson received \$40.00 per week, to do general clowning and operate the Funny Ford. Mrs. Anderson worked elephants, rode ménage, and received \$20.00 per week. She is not very much. On as much as we are going to have the Funny Ford the coming season we should engage Mr. Anderson as it is rather difficult to secure a man to operate this Ford successfully. He was also one of the best clowns we had. Mr. Mickey Blue did the comedy in the Funny Ford act. He is also a very good



The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

25, 1930 letter.

"Last year we had a lady with the show by the name of Ruth Hendryx. As far as her work goes she is all right, and does iron jaw, swinging ladder and for awhile worked in the

Ward Flying Act. For certain reasons I would not care to have her with the John Robinson's Circus. She would be all right for any of the other shows. I might say that she and Mr. Rudynoff were very familiar to each other during the summer. I try to keep this down all possible and for this reason do not care to have her with the show, knowing the situation before hand, as no doubt, the same thing would occur again the coming season were we to re-engage her to be with the John Robinson's Circus."

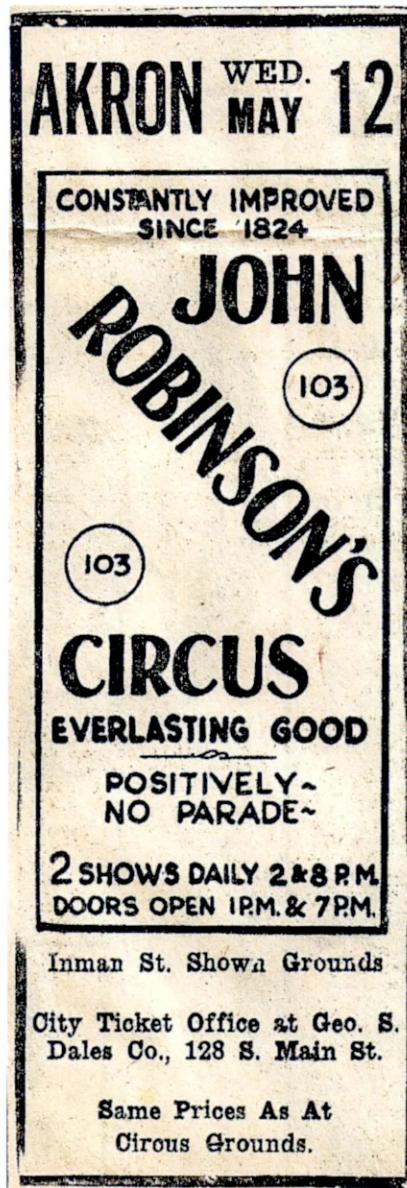
Pat Valdo took Jess Adkins' advice per a February 11, 1930 letter.

"Your valued favor of Feb. 7th received and note you will furnish me at an early date details concerning the broom illusion act.

"This will also acknowledge contract of Lawrence Anderson, which I have signed and am today forwarding to him.

Manager Adkins also commented that "I note what you say about Vick Moran asking for \$5.00 per week more. If you do give him this extra \$5.00 I hope you will impress upon him that he will have to get some wardrobe and clean up as his work last year was very, very unsatisfactory.

"I know having a 'boss clown' is not a good thing. We were supposed to have had one last year but he did not amount to much and as you state it is much better to have the clowns work individually and for the show."



Ad for Akron, Ohio.

Author

It sounded like Jess Adkins was getting a little upset with the flying acts and their possible slow pace in the performance when he wrote Valdo on February 11, 1930.

"With further reference to your letter of recent date advising me the acts which you contracted and those which you were figuring for the John Robinson's Circus. Now, what I am going to say here I trust you will accept in the spirit it is given. I am very, very much interested in the success of the performance with the John Robinson's Circus. While I have nothing to do with the booking, I am, I know, as much interested in getting a good show as you are in having the performance which you put together give the public satisfaction, and what I have in mind at this time is the two three people flying acts. An act of this kind would, or course, only constitute one catcher and two flyers and with only one catcher it seems to me the act is bound to be slow as the catcher could not possible work continuously throughout the act. He will have to catch a trick and then raise up into the trapeze and rest before he catches another trick. I understand the Flying Floyds still have to build their circus rigging as they have been playing fairs for several years and in as much as you are getting a three people act from Seigrist it has occurred to me that possibly these people have not gotten their circus rigging built as yet. It would seem to me that a four people act would give us a great deal more satisfactory number that we can expect out of two three people acts. With two catchers and two flyers the act could be working continuously as the two catchers could alternate in catching the tricks. This, of course, would probably increase the cost of the two acts around \$80.00 to \$90.00 a week as they would have to secure another catcher and I think the salary of a catcher ranges from \$40.00 to \$50.00 per week.

"I have put the program together from the acts which you have furnished me and the acts here belonging to the show and it is, of course, customary to finish the show with the flying act. In fact, the flying acts have been appearing in this position for so long that you can notice the audience getting sort of restless when the flying act is on as they know the show is just about over. If it would be at all possible to increase these acts to four people each I believe we would get a great deal more out of them.

"Please understand now, Mr. Valdo, that I am not trying to change your arrangements but am simply offering my opinion of the number in question as I am deeply interested

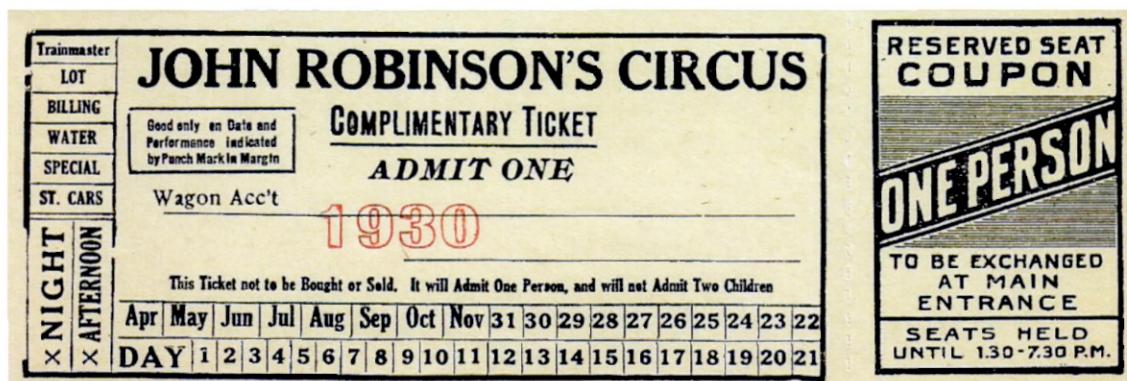
in the success of the John Robinson's Circus performance. I have a personal interest in the show and I would like to see a performance that would send the people away boosting."

Valdo responded to Adkins on February 13, 1930 after consulting with John Ringling.

"Relying to your letter regarding theatrical acts. Mr. Ringling personally engaged both of these acts and in regards to the Floyds I have not seen their act in years and don't know a thing about them.

"He also likes the smaller acts better as he contends the tricks stand out better with one catcher and cites the Coronas, Clarks and this season Charles Seigrist will do a three people set. His opinion is that the two catchers confuse the public, but I can also see your point of having a continuous routine, but would not suggest changing now as the act here has their rigging all set and are practicing daily. This act has decided to use their own name and will be known as the Flying Hills.

"Regarding Vick Moran he has promised to dress up and think he is already on account of the singing mule, which Mr. Ringling likes very much and on account of his stilts.



Complimentary ticket.

Author

"I appreciate the spirit your letter was written in and wish to assure that we are always glad to get any suggestions because we are all working for the same end and want you to know you can write freely to me in confidence or otherwise as I believe a frank exchange of opinions will be of mutual benefit to all of us."

Manager Adkins was also doing a little juggling himself and he reported to Valdo on February 14, 1930 that he was to provide props for other shows.

"Mr. Terrell has referred to me your letter of Feb. 7th in regard to the revolving tables. Last year there were only five revolving tables used on the shows, three with John Robinson's Circus and two with Sells Floto Circus. Will you please advise me just how many tables you want to figure on with each show. It is my understanding that Mr. Charles Luckey, who is now in charge of repair work of the Sparks Circus, is to return to Peru on March 1st, and I am figuring on him

looking after these tables. I would, therefore, appreciate it very much if you would let me know just exactly how many I should get ready for each show.

"I also note that it is the desire of Mr. Ringling that the football horses be eliminated from the programs this season."

The word came back to Adkins from Sarasota on February 17th, 1930 that: "The present plans call for two tables with the Floto Show, three, as usual, with your show, and three for the Wallace show. Of course these plans are not definitely decided and suggest that you have all available tables in first class shape. Will let you know as soon as possible regarding the extra ones you will have to build."

Adkins telegraphed John Ringling on his progress: "Have not repaired or built revolving tables was figuring on Charlie Luckey taking care of this work when he returns here from Macon March First. How soon will Barnes require their tables? Luckey is best man we have for this work and Mr. Watts has advised he would return him here March First."

Pat Valdo responded on February 26, 1930 that an alternate solution might be had since the Barnes Circus was opening before any of the others: "Mr. Ringling asks that you send three tables as soon as possible to the Barnes show, Baldwin Park as there is such a short time before the opening out there and do know who they have to make them. Then when Charley Luckey gets back to Peru he can make three new ones to replace the three you send to Barnes show as he will have plenty of time to make them."

There were still other pressing matters that Adkins needed to address but a letter from Valdo on February 18, 1930 did not help.

"Mr. Ringling has not yet decided regarding the wild west concert with Robinson's show and still hopes of get-

ting some midgets for concert. However, he suggests that you keep in with the wrestler in case you need him later. Also think it advisable to keep some sort of line on your wild west people, as there is nothing definite settles regarding the midgets.

"Cannot get anything definite regarding Rhoda Royal, but will keep trying. We are still working on some sort of a feature act for you to replace Arab troupe.

Adkins reply on February 22, 1930 sounded optimistic.

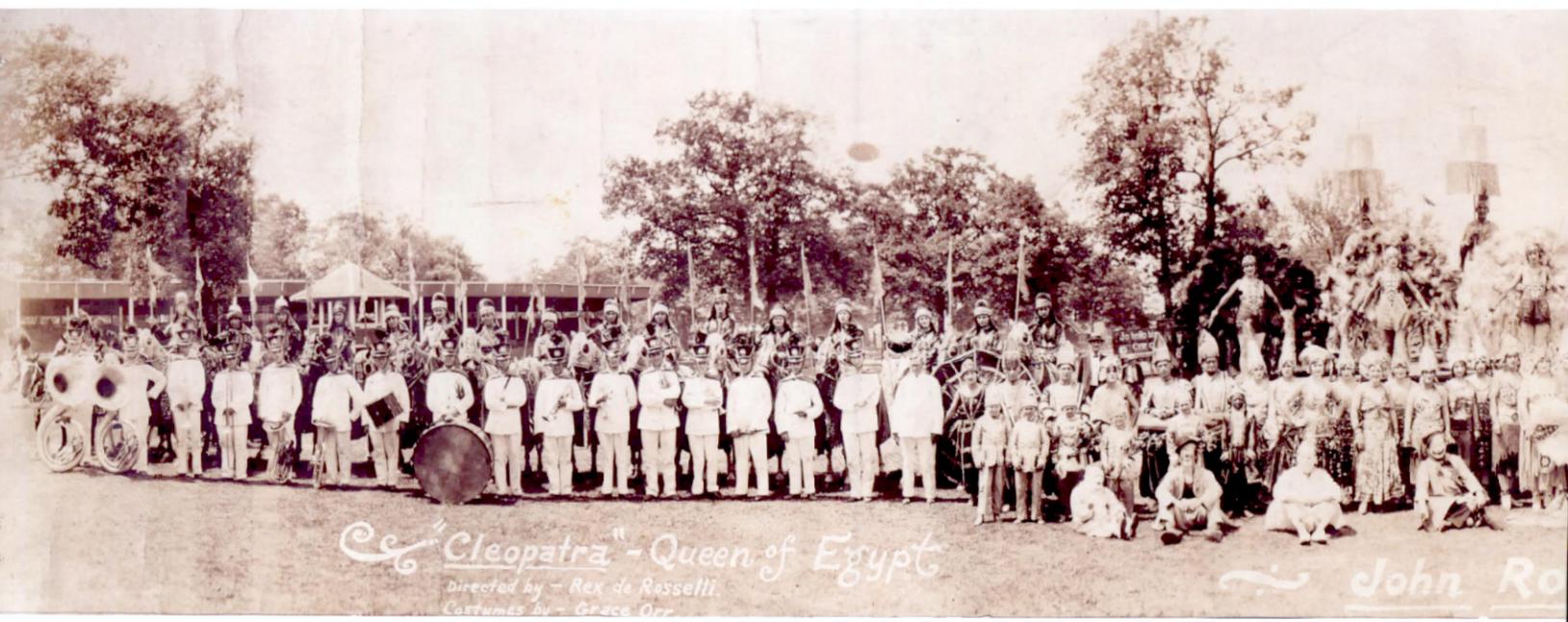
"Your letter of Feb. 18th received and note what you say regarding the concert for John Robinson's Circus. I am doing the best I can to stall these wild west people, also the wrestler. However, just as soon as you know definitely I wish you would advise me at once as these people, or course, are very anxious to know whether or not they will be placed the coming season.

"Note what you say regarding Rhoda Royal. I advised Rhoda to write Mr. Ringling direct some two weeks ago and he informs me that he did so. I, of course, do not know whether or not he said anything about salary. I, personally, agree with Mr. Ringling regarding the salary of Rhoda and his wife the past season. It was too much for a show of this size, especially when we have a man like Mr. Rudynoff training the horses in winter quarters. No doubt, Mr. Ringling will be able to make satisfactory arrangements with Rhoda."

Valdo was keeping Adkins in the loop as he wrote on February 26, 1930.

"Had a wire tonight from Rhoda Royal asking 65 [\$65.00] for himself and 35 [\$35.00] for Mrs. Royal. I tried my best to get Mr. Ringling to decide and his exact words were 'Well we do not need much of an equestrian director there as Jess watches things pretty close himself.'

"Have an acrobatic troupe for the Robinson's show,



Performers ready for the spec.

The Ringling Tibbals Collection

THE MONGE TROUPE. They will play the Garden with us and then join you. We will also use the Wallace show acrobatic act with us in the Garden.

"Have a letter from Kellys and wish your opinion regarding them. Of course you will have two double trapeze acts but the Floyd double trapeze act is done by the two men which I personally do not like as well as a mixed act. I think the Kellys worth the money and are getting your acrobatic act 100 dollars cheaper than the Arabs and Mrs. Kelly also does loop but would like your candid opinion in this matter.

"Please advise McCree Hollis that Mr. Ringling will want the same riding as last year. The three principal acts and the comedy act."

On March 4, 1930 Adkins notified Valdo that "in regard to the Hollis-McCree Troupe playing the Chicago engagement with Sells Floto Circus. I am advising Mr. Hollis accordingly and will write you just as soon as I receive his reply."

That same day Adkins received a letter from Valdo about the show's acts.

"Will mail Kelly contracts today.

"Mr. Ringling saw Monge troupe at Tampa Fair last year or previous year and at that time did not care so much for them but now has taken the act through Wirth-Hamid office. They will play the Garden engagement with Ringling show and we can get a line on them but Wirth says they are very good and we will see."

"Tried my best to get an answer for Rhoda Royal but every time I bring it up he says we can do that later."

"I mentioned the carrying acts instead of the comedy acts and Mr. Ringling says that after reconsidering he thinks the big comedy act a bigger flash and will keep it the same for another season."

Rhoda Royal's procrastination cost him a position on the John Robinson's Circus for his name does not appear in the program. The featured Wild West Concert was called Cheyenne Bill's Wild West after show under the direction of Bill Penny, so apparently Rhoda moved on. The other item is that the Monge Troupe went to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and Jess Adkins missed the headaches that they brought with them.

As the show prepared for the road Jess Adkins wrote John Ringling at his New York City address on April 10, 1930.

"Note you are sending the seal trainer with the two seals to the John Robinson's Circus. The seal den which we have is too small to handle nine seals so I am arranging to put the two which you are sending in the back end of our polar bear cage.

"Regarding our sleeping accommodations. I have laid the people out and find that we can sleep about twelve more performers than called for on contracts which we have at the present time. I haven't any information regarding how the Monge Troupe is made up but I figured that there were two married couples and five single men in the act. If I remember correctly, when the act arrived in this country there were two women in the act. If I am not correct in this will you please advise.

"The stock car arrived from Deland and we have today sent Mr. Johnnie J. Jones a check for \$2,000.00 in payment for same. I presume you are arranging for the second stock car for Sells Floto Circus. I mention this at this time because the car which was purchased from Mr. Jones arrived here without mangers in it and it requires quite a little work to arrange the interior of one of these stock cars."

A brief review of the 1930 opening of the John Robin-



son's Circus appeared in the May 1930 issue of the *White Tops*: "107th season, Cincinnati, Ohio April 28. All new canvas. Dress rehearsal evening before to representative audience of invited guests. Jess Adkins, manager; 25 cars, no parade; 15 cages in menagerie; 12 elephants; four poles; 160 round top; three 50-foot middles; 8,000 seats. Harry MacFarland, equestrian director, Spec. Cleopatra by Rex Rosselli with Roy Delano and wife featured singers. Lavish elaborate gorgeous. Wade Zumwalt band; three rings. Arthur Hopper, general agent; Bob Hickey, general press.

"Bucking mules, revolving tables, pony, dogs; Mrs. White, Mrs. Kelly and Miss Large loop traps; camel and horses, horse and pony; swinging ladders, Bessie Hollis and Isabel McCree in lady single riding acts and Pinky Hollis, man single. Dog acts, pony, bear and monkeys, Mrs. MacFarland. Four liberty horses by Rudy Rudinoff. Eddie Reece, strong man, auto passing over him; Molay hand to hand, Ernest and Ida White high perch. Seals, Double traps by Kellys and Hills. Elephants, Stella Cronin, Madge Zumwalt and Billie Burton. Twelve liberty horses each ring, Rudinoff [sic], Davis and Butler. Iron jaw number. Comedy riding by McCree-Hollis, Comedy auto; Neiss high wire act (no net); Molay Arabs; Menage and jumping horses. Flying Hills and Flying Floyds casting acts. Races. Wild West concert. Slivers Johnson leads clowns. Duke Dukenbrod has side show."

The John Robinson's Circus sideshow "Duke Dukenbrod, side show manager; Mme. Orr, mental marvel; Belle Santoy and her Scotch lads and lassies; Great Ceylon Mystery with Tiny Jackson; Mlle. D'Arcy, snake enchantress; Jolly Josie, fat girl; McCoy Troupe, Swiss yodelers and bell ringers; Kitty Smith, armless girl; George August, giant; Princess Jennie, American doll lady; Emma Todd, Hindu torture cabinet; Royal Native Hawaiians (7 people); Chet Caine, tattooed man; Henry H. Brown's Plantation Minstrels (16 people)." **BW**

Endnotes

1. The New Yorker, April 19, 1952.
2. Sam Abbott, "Whales Smelled out the \$\$," *Billboard*, June 28, 1952, pp. 48, 63.
3. Route and research materials, Ted Bowman collection.

John Backman operated animal shows on carnivals and eventually put out a two car show after World War I. The 1919 and 1920 seasons found the show opening at San Antonio, Texas and routed as far west as New Mexico and as far east as Arkansas. The show was titled Backman-Tinch Two Car Circus in 1920. Al Tinch was a San Antonio tinsmith and plumber who owned the railroad cars, but did not travel with the show. Backman, the manager of the show, who also worked in the sideshow doing Punch & Judy, glass blowing and magic.

4. Author's collection.

From their business address at 19 to 25 South Hoyne

Avenue, Chicago, Illinois the company produced a number of side show banners. Their head banner painter Fred G. Johnson was the vice-president of the firm and a well noted artist. The company produced twelve by twenty foot banners for the 1928 Hagenbeck Wallace Circus depicting Jessie Franks the bag puncher, Mickey Mansion a tattooed man, Jolly Babe the fat woman, and Jimmy Logue a juggler. (4)

5. Rex Rosselli was a well known producer and had previously worked for the Al. G. Barnes Circus in 1924. He was responsible for the creation of the 1924 opening spectacle of Pocahontas at the Court of Queen Anne.

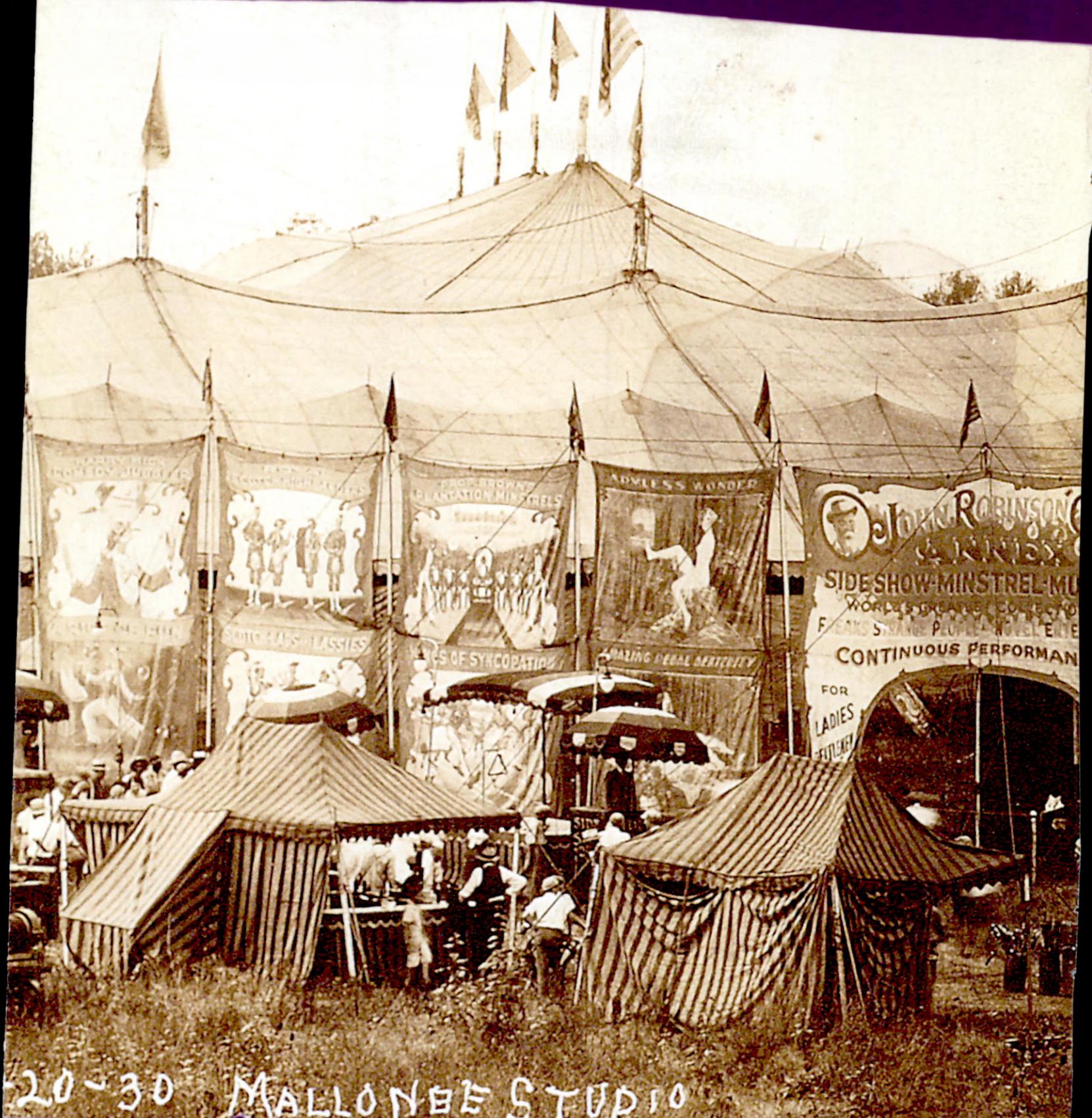
6. Author's collection

7. One gets the impression that the broom illusions that John Ringling wanted on his circus side shows were used goods and not in the best of condition. While Manager Cronin decided to have a replacement for his equipment built by the Thayer Company in California, one also wonders about what was given to the other shows. On March 24, 1930 Carl Hathway one of the superintendents at the winter quarters in Sarasota, Florida wrote to Pat Valdo at the New York Coliseum in New York City. The letter simply reads: "Dear Pat: You forgot to take the broom illusion with you, what shall we do with it?"

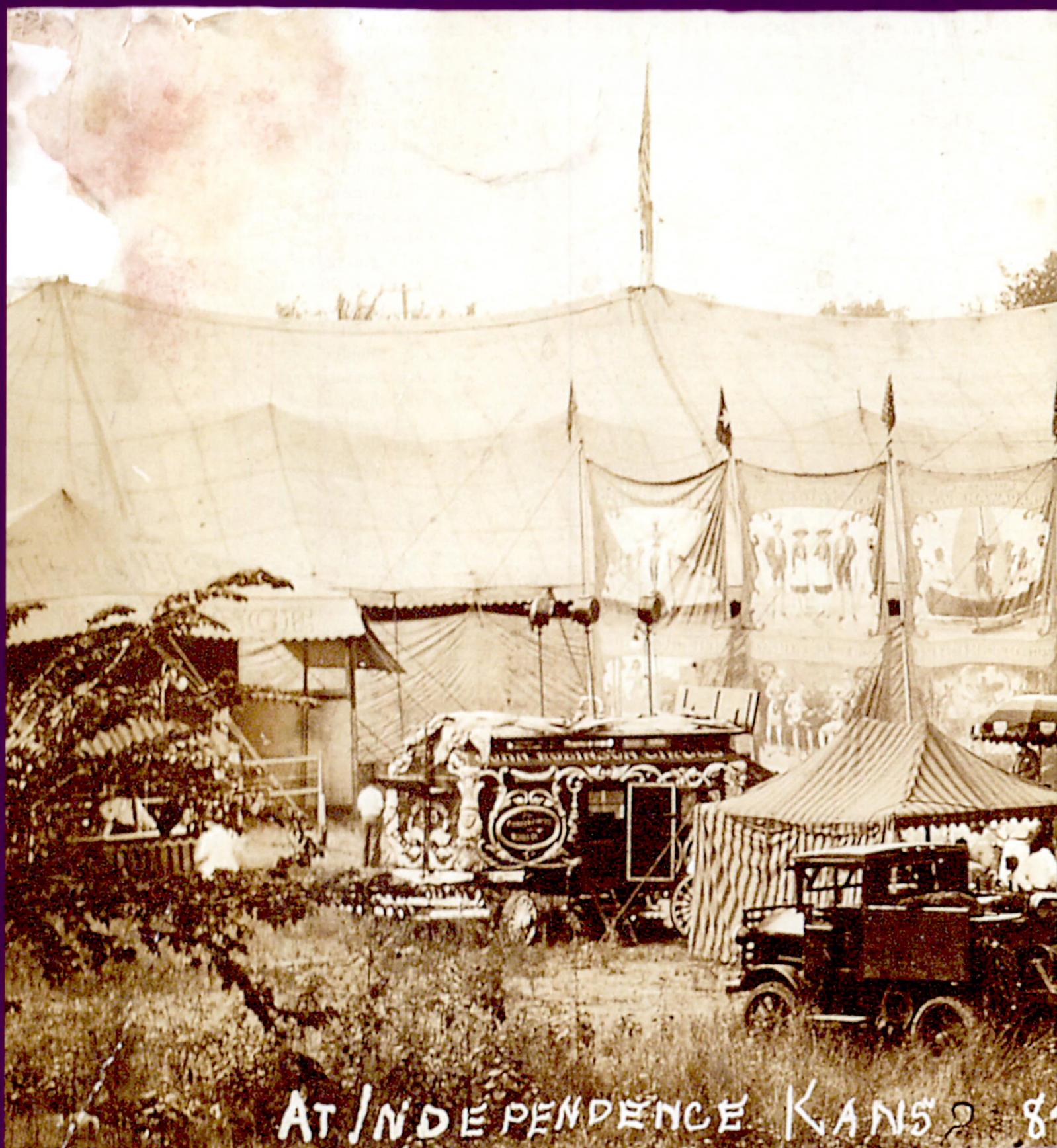
This was the second year that R.B. & B.B. was using the four 'bannerline' wagons and possibly there was no room to add any additional attractions. In order to add the broom illusion to R.B. & B.B. it would have required repainting one of the panels. Pat Valdo may have left the broom illusion in Sarasota while the show moved to New York City to eliminate another problem. There was no history of the broom illusion being used on the R.B. & B.B. side show from 1919 to 1929. However on 1928 The Madison Square Garden opening was augmented with attractions from Namy Smith's Coney Island show, and this it may be where the idea of introducing the broom illusion came from.

The other possibility is the Sam Gumpertz, John Ringling's neighbor in Sarasota may have enticed the circus magnet to include the broom illusion in the sideshow. Gumpertz built a large home in Sarasota in 1922. He became a close friend of John Ringling who often confided in Sam and sought his advice.

The broom illusion was well known on Gumpertz's Coney Island as a come on. *The New York Times* in 1927 printed an article about the unique style of ballyhoo that existed on Coney Island. "There are, from time to time, radical changes in the fashions of ballyhooing at Coney Island. Last season the vogue in outside attractions—those staged, as bait, on the platforms at the entrance to many of the side shows—called for the mildly intriguing illusion of a young woman reclining in midair, supported only by a broom." *New York Times*, July 10, 1927.



-20-30 MALLONEE STUDIO



AT INDEPENDENCE KANS 2 8